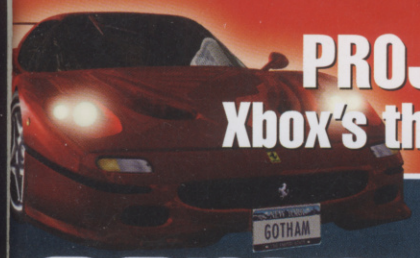

PROJECT GOTHAM
Xbox's thrill racer rated

DEAD OR ALIVE 3
Buxom girls fighting!

EVERY NEW GAME REVIEWED!

computer and video games

METAL GEAR 2
8 Reasons why this game will rule 2002

WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2
First game details & pics
Plus Unreal 2 & Warfare info

ALLIED ASSAULT
The greatest PC blaster ever. Fact

SMASH BROS. MELEE
Nintendo All-Stars slug it out in GameCube's hi-octane bruiser

PS2 · PC CD ROM · XBOX · GAME BOY ADVANCE

£2.80 • ISSUE 243 • FEB 02
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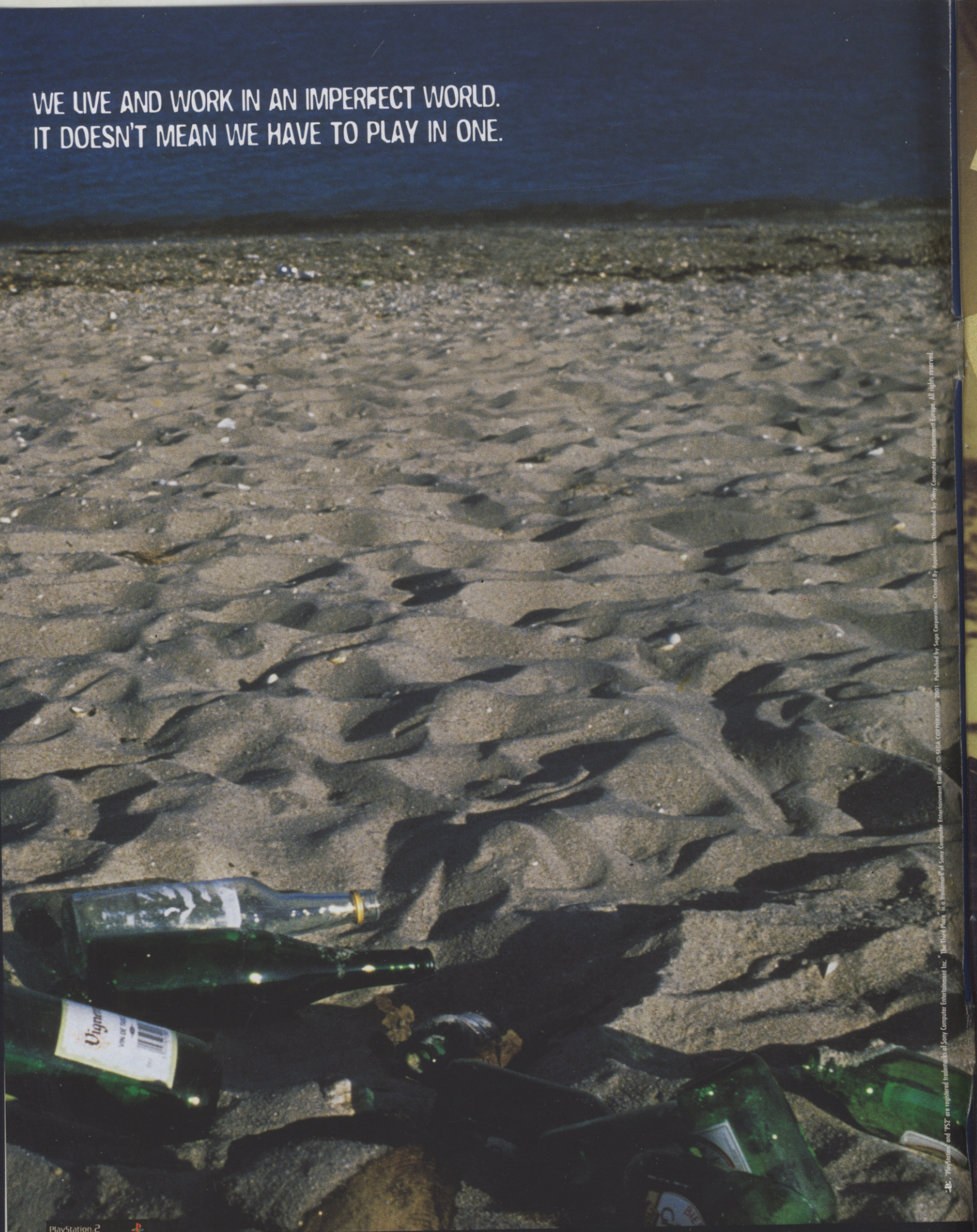
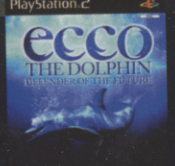
WE LIVE AND WORK IN AN IMPERFECT WORLD.
IT DOESN'T MEAN WE HAVE TO PLAY IN ONE.



PlayStation.2



Who'd like to be beside this seaside? Swim in brilliant crystal clear water, explore exquisite seascapes and run rings round sharks in Ecco the Dolphin. Even at forty fathoms below, it's a breath of fresh air from PlayStation 2. Made by Sega for PlayStation 2.

SEGA

uk.playstation.com

PlayStation.2
THE THIRD PLACE

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IT'S KILLING TIME!

2001 was a drop-dead good year. PlayStation 2 went ballistic with killer games such as Gran Turismo 3, Devil May Cry and Grand Theft Auto III, while trains and buses nationwide were suddenly crowded with gamers glued to Mario Kart on GBA.

It's about to get a whole lot better though. Metal Gear 2 is just a few weeks off, then Xbox invades a high street near you at the beginning of March, and with awesome stuff like Halo and Project Gotham Racing ready for launch, if you're into games you've got to snap up one of these puppies fast.

And just when you thought your wallet couldn't take any more of a battering, GameCube turns up with Mario and Zelda in tow. Let's face it, there's no choice but to fork out for a 'Cube if you love your games as much as we do.

2002, then – a bloody great year and we haven't even reached February yet. Let's just hope our bank balances can take the strain...

Adios amigos.

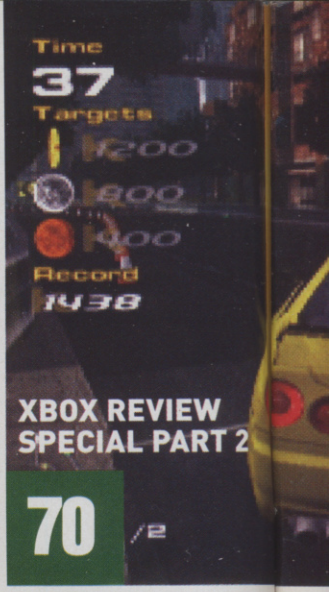
UNREAL INVASION

ON THE COVER

UNREAL 2 AND UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2 **24**

They toppled the king of shooters. Now they're back. And they're multiplying...

WORLD EXCLUSIVE!



XBOX REVIEW SPECIAL PART 2

70 /2

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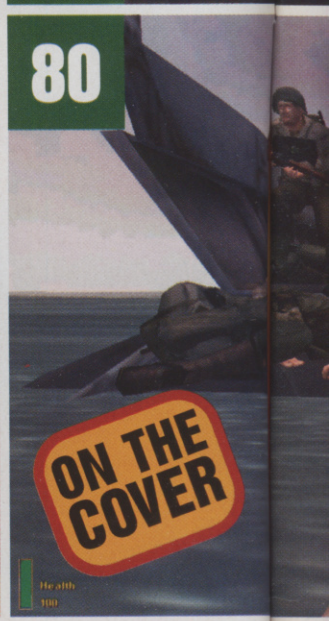

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2 OUT: MARCH 8 WORDS & SCREENSHOTS: DEAN SCOTT

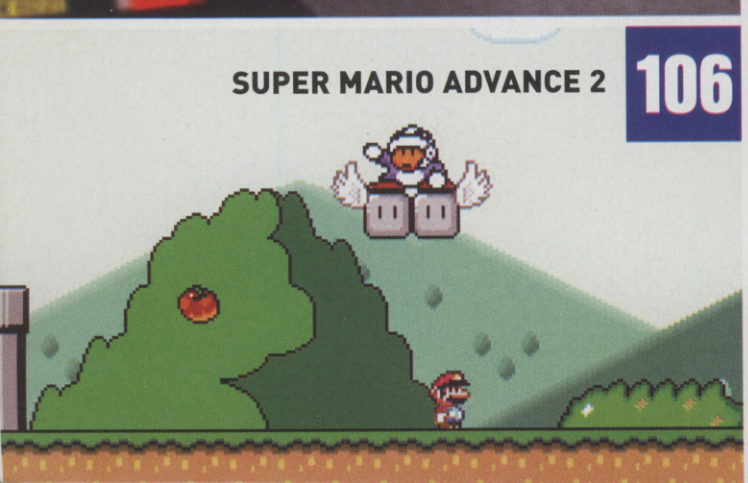
WHY METAL GEAR SOLID 2 IS THE GREATEST PS2 GAME... EVER

8 REASONS WHY METAL GEAR SOLID 2 IS THE BEST PS2 GAME YET

If you're buying a game in 2002, make sure this one is top of your list

It's nearly here. Since the first whispers of a PlayStation 2 sequel to Metal Gear Solid, gamers have been feverish with anticipation. Trailers were put out on the web. A short demo was bundled with Zone Of The Enders. But as good as they both looked, they could only hint at the full majesty of the finished game.

In fact, Metal Gear: Sons Of Liberty is so impressive that many of you will struggle to think of a better game, ever. It's not a pure videogame in the same vein as Mario – it aspires to a different, more cinematic form of entertainment. And over the next seven pages, we highlight just eight of the many things that make the game great. Is it going to spoil it for you to see it? No way – this is just the tip of the iceberg.



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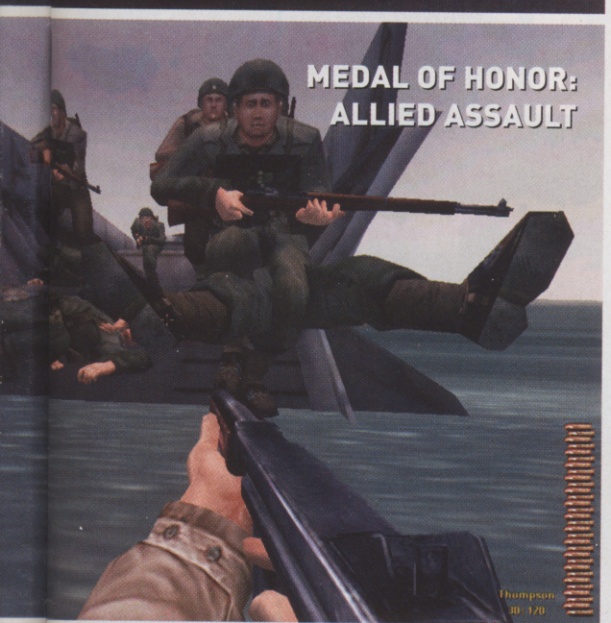
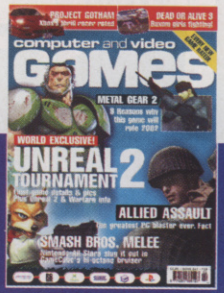


ISSUE 243 FEBRUARY 2002



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"My Spidey Sense Is Tingling"

SPIDER-MAN THE MOVIE GAMES

The Spider-Man film touches down next year, and as we've learned to expect from enormo-bucks blockbusters, there'll be six-legged game tie-ins all over.

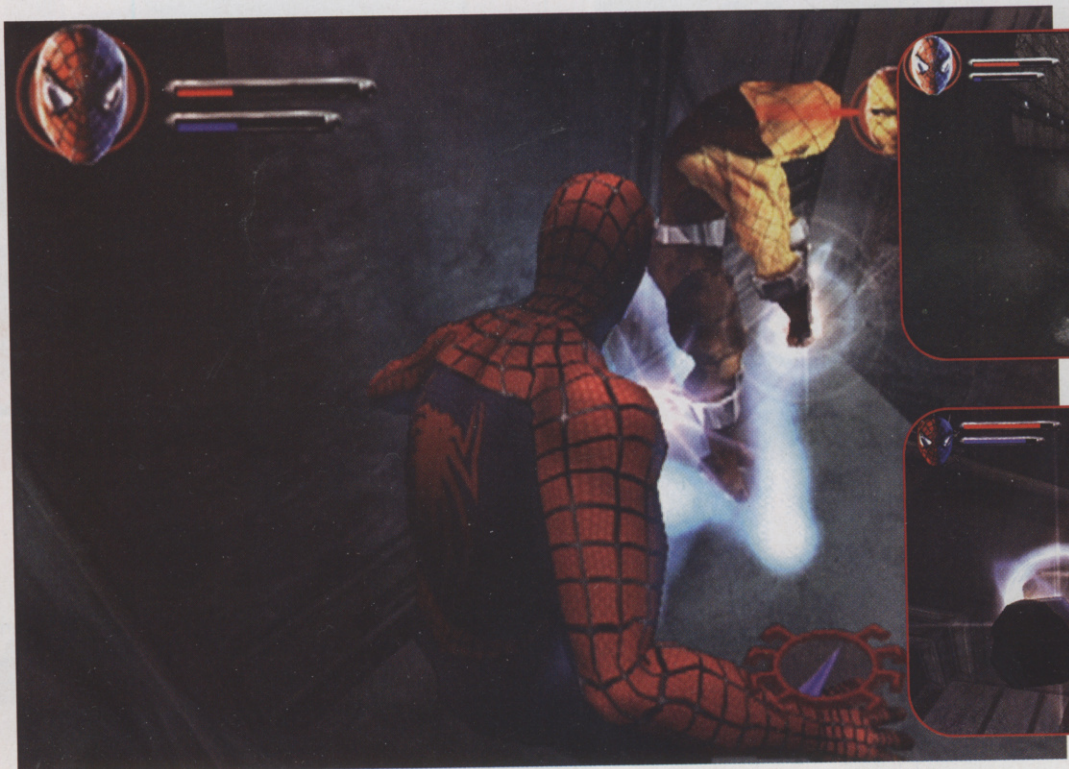
Yup, Spider-Man The Movie (which is the name of the film and the game) is set to grace PS2, Xbox, GameCube and Game Boy Advance. We're talking next-gen overload here. Developed by Treyarch, the safe pair of hands behind last year's cool DC Spidey game, it'll be a mix of action/adventure and exploration in keeping with the feel of the comics and the movie. Basically, this means you'll guide Spidey through a storyline based on the film, twatting baddies, spinning webs and generally being acrobatic in (or should that be over) the streets of New York.

On this front, Treyarch promises a more gymnastic Spider-Man than ever before, as well as a slightly darker tone more in keeping with the mood of the movie. Aerial fighting has been included for the first time as well, making full use of a souped-up combat system. Expect to see the game around May next year. As far as we know, gameplay will be more or less the same on all formats, though we'll keep you posted on that one.

Amazing motion blurring effects when all hell breaks loose

Cinematic camera angles

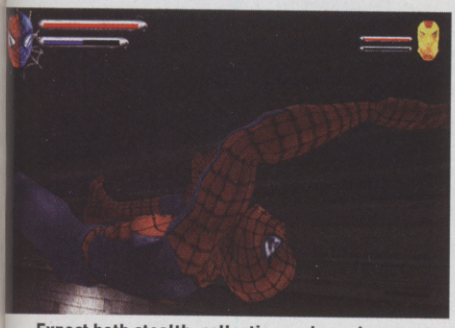
The Green Goblin is in the movie, but is he in the game?



Moves are much the same as the last few Spidey instalments, with a few new ones too, including aerial combat

2,000 polygons go into Spidey

The villainous Shocker has appeared in other Spidey games



Expect both stealth, collection and puzzle aspects

Some sections will play out against the clock

ASKIN' POWERS

In an exclusive interview, CVG grilled developer Matt Powers about the game.

CVG: HOW CLOSELY DOES THE GAME FOLLOW THE PLOT OF THE MOVIE?
MP: "The game's storyline largely follows the plot of the film. With Sony/Columbia Picture's permission, we've been able to modify certain story points that were difficult to tell in a videogame, and we've added a few more supervillains to keep things interesting."

CVG: WHICH VILLAINS CAN WE EXPECT TO MAKE AN APPEARANCE?
MP: "Right now, we have announced the Vulture, Shocker and, of course, the Green Goblin."

CVG: HAVE THE MOVIE PRODUCERS HAD ANY INPUT INTO THE GAME?
MP: "Yes, they have. Most of the game's elements have been reviewed and approved by the movie studio, including director Sam Rami. The people at Sony/Columbia Pictures have been tremendously helpful in helping us capture the look and feel of the movie."

CVG: PREVIOUS SPIDER-MAN TITLES HAVE HAD HUGE INCENTIVES TO REPLAY THEM TO FIND ALL THE SECRETS. HOW WILL YOU BRING PEOPLE BACK TO THIS GAME ONCE THEY'VE COMPLETED IT?
MP: "While we'd prefer not to reveal any of the hidden or unlockable elements just yet, I can say that we realise the impact these features have had on the replay value of the first two titles, and this one won't disappoint on that front."

CVG: IF YOU HAD TO SUM UP WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE WITH THIS GAME IN A COUPLE OF SENTENCES, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?
MP: "We are trying to make a great game based on a timeless superhero and his debut in an epic feature film."

MORE MOVES FOR ONLINE GAMING

World Widening Web

New moves are underway to create the first network providing super-fast internet connections for PlayStation 2 users.

"This will be multiplayer gaming and broadband access integrated like never before," frothed Tom Cotter, head of games at Telewest Broadband, which is developing the network.

The service is currently at the trial stage, and likely to have limited public trials in the early part of 2002.

Mobile Suit Gundam: a popular Jap cartoon

Its aim is to provide a one-stop-shop for PS2 gamers, allowing users to download demos, read reviews (*Ahem! That's CVG's job, y'splitters - ed*) and get involved in online games. On its launch, it's likely to be the world's first dedicated PS2 broadband network, so Telewest could be set to rake the cash in on the back of it.

Meanwhile, Xbox (and PC) owners can look forward to – wait for it – 160,000-player games, when an internet game service launches next summer. That's what we're told, anyway.

In readiness for the new online explosion, Bandai is developing an online version of Mobile Suit Gundam for Xbox, and partner Sammy is providing the servers to let thousands of players play the mech-tastic game simultaneously. The game will continue for as long as people play it, and storylines will develop according to how players react. Who needs real-life, eh?

SPIDER-MAN, ONLINE GAMING, GTAIII COMES TO HANDHELD

This jump-started it all. Crap graphics, so-so gameplay

GTA2 made things sicker, more violent, but, er, worse

This is the kind of view you're likely to get on your GBA

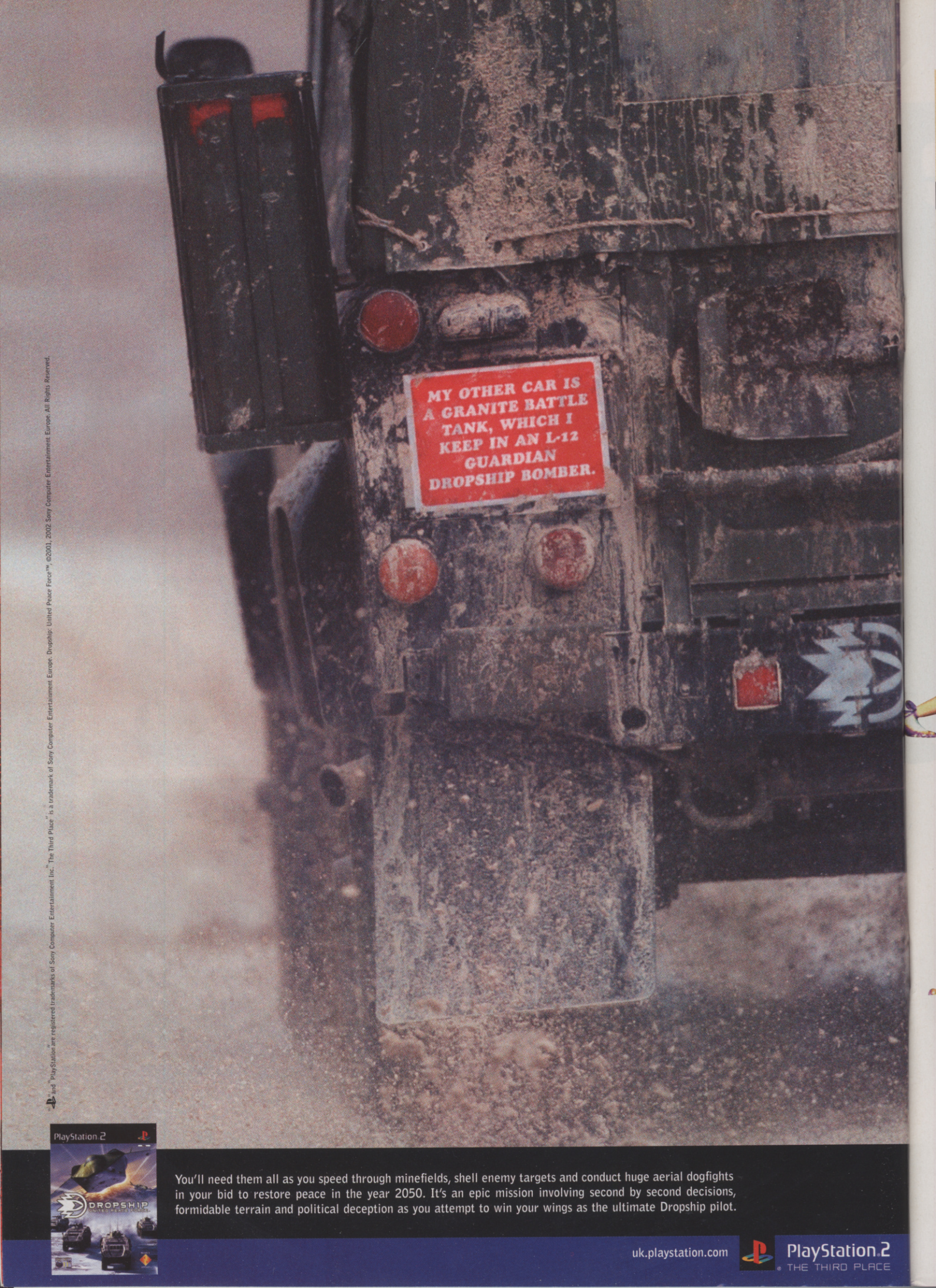
Grand In Your Hand

GTAIII COMES TO GBA? WELL, SORT OF

Good news Game Boys, Grand Theft Auto III is coming to Advance.

At the time of going to press we know precious few details about the port, which looks like being released in April next year, so it's speculation time.

It'll most likely be a top-down view drive-o-rama like the first two games, as GBA surely can't reproduce PS2's stunning 3D visuals. Plot-wise it's likely to be a mix of all three games and, er, that's it. We'll bring you more info just as soon as we get it. But one thing's for sure, with GBA's popularity with younger gamers, this crime-friendly title will surely be kicking up a stink with parents everywhere when it's released.



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You'll need them all as you speed through minefields, shell enemy targets and conduct huge aerial dogfights in your bid to restore peace in the year 2050. It's an epic mission involving second by second decisions, formidable terrain and political deception as you attempt to win your wings as the ultimate Dropship pilot.

uk.playstation.com

PlayStation.2
THE THIRD PLACE

Cutting Edge!

ALL-NEW SOUL CALIBUR 2 SCREENS

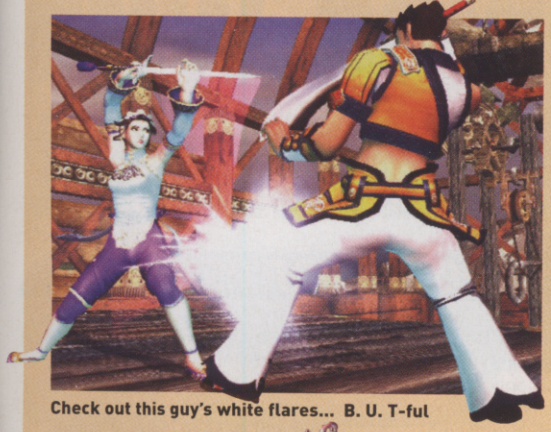
Tekken 4's not the only arcade fighter we're currently getting hot under the collar about. Take a look at these screens for Soul Calibur 2, and you'll see why there's room on the block for more than one fighting don.

Soul Calibur 2 is currently being developed by those brainy blokes at Namco for arcade release, but console versions have already been announced for Xbox, PS2 and GameCube, all of which are likely to appear next year. Unfortunately, it looks as though any Dreamcast owners who have been hanging onto a tiny thread of hope that the game would appear for the DC can let go now. Sorry, lads.

In any case, the visuals we've seen so far are stunning, with Xianghua from the first Dreamcast game making an appearance and looking tasty, in a kinda game-girl sort of way. What's more, Namco reckons all versions will look equally hot, whatever platform they appear on. Good news. So, are they looking the business? See for yourself, sonny. We certainly think so...

These new screens focus on sexy Xianghua

Mitsurugi feels the sharp end of our heroine's sword and tries to can-can out the way



Check out this guy's white flares... B. U. T-ful

Smaller fighters move fast

Leaping ladies. Lovely

Xianghua's attack has been blocked so she does her bendy-legged faux attack

NEWS SHORTS

On the Richter scale of surprises, they don't register much above a two, but here's two more reasons to be excited about games... First up, Activision has confirmed it's working on Tony Hawk's 4 (out before March 2004). Meanwhile PS2 is to get a slice of PC shooter carnage, with Soldier Of Fortune – Gold. Woo!

PS2 owners are already bonding in James Bond Agent Under Fire, but for those of a Nintendoid or Microsoft bent, the good news is that GameCube and Xbox versions are in the works. We'll pass on details and dates as soon as we get them.

An internet virus that caused $5 million worth of damage has been traced back to Israeli kids! The mischievous boffs, called 'script kiddies', were apparently involved in an online turf war and created the damaging Goner worm. They now face jail.

Microsoft said it would have online gaming for Xbox up and running six months after launch, and it wasn't lying. The latest reports say that games in Japan and the States will be online in May 2002. Don't hold your breath for deathmatches on this side of the pond, though...

Yank soldiers are to use a special version of PC game Operation Flashpoint for training exercises. The US Marine Corps will be learning skills from a version of the game called VBS1 (Virtual Battlefield Systems). We'll take 'em on. Any day.

METAL GEAR GOES MOULDY

"Get 'em While The

With the eagerly anticipated Metal Gear Solid 2 now not out until March, the chances are you've got a Solid Snake itch you're just desperate to give a satisfying scratch. Well, you don't have to wait that long, all thanks to the wonder of toys.

Six Metal Gear Solid 2 figures, to be precise, lovingly moulded in wipe-clean plastic and available for just £12.99 each from a comic shop near you (we got ours from Forbidden Planet). So let's take a look at them, shall we?

Developer Top Trumps

Once they were three, now they are 20. California-based Neversoft are the geezers behind the Tony Hawk's 3 and the latest two Spider-Man releases. Here they are at the wedding of Neversoft main man, Mick West. Gawd bless 'em.

TONGUE-TWISTING NAME Only if you're Chris Eubank	**70**
WORTH Lots. How many people own Hawk's 3?	**90**
PAST HITS Apocalypse, MDK	**80**
STAYING POWER We think Tony is here to stay	**80**
GEEK OR GOOD LAD(S)? Judging by the champers, they like a party	**90**
FUTURE POTENTIAL If you fancy California, they're expanding	**80**

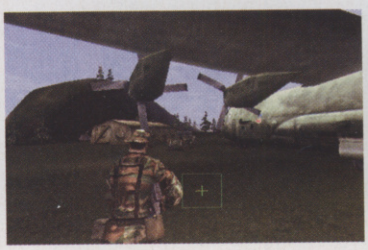
Scoping With Bereavement

DELTA FORCE POISED FOR PS2 DEBUT

Classic first-person shooter Delta Force will debut next autumn on PS2.

The game, previously only available to PC users, sees players mixing stealth with Arnie antics, rampaging through military establishments, doling out hot death like it's happy hour at the bullet shop. You get a mix of long-range and close-quarter fighting styles, with your sniper rifle needed for stealth-based levels.

You might've seen loads of sniper rifles since, but Delta Force pioneered 'em. Check out the shots...



PS2 takes Delta Force under its wing...

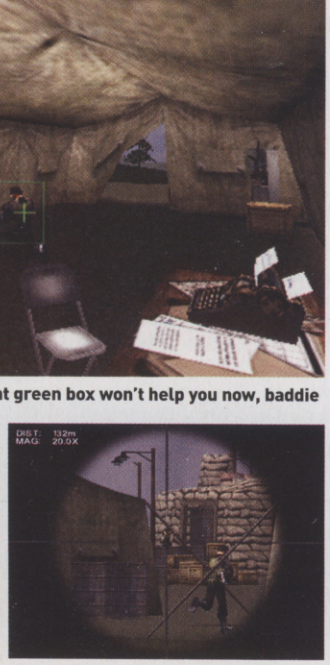
Tsk, lying down on the job again?

y're Hot!"

BONUS SECRET!
Each of the six MGS2 figures comes with an extra piece, designed to confuse those who don't read the next few sentences. Because each of those six pieces is actually a bit of Metal Gear Ray, and when you've collected all six characters, you can make your own Metal Gear Ray – he stands about twice the size of the other characters. How cool is that?

Clever, but hiding behind that transparent green box won't help you now, baddie

The crew of Das Boot were applying for a new navigator when captured

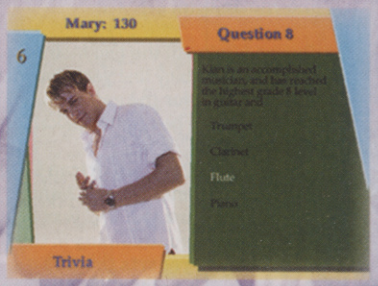


"They'll never see me in this rolled over barrel. Oh, it's a sniper sight"

5 Boys - 500 Questions - 1 Quiz

westlife
FAN - O - MANIA

Are you a real FAN?



• 500 challenging questions
• Exclusive Videos
• Exclusive Audio
• Exclusive Pictures

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NEWS SHORTS

Our pals at CVG online reckon this is the first image of Final Fantasy XII, heading PS2-wards sometime er... in the next three years. Rumour has it FFXII will be a return to the usual format after the FFXI online outing.

If you're an Aussie, we've got some bad news for you, cobber: Grand Theft Auto III has been banned in Oz. At least until developers DMA take out all the 'graphic violence'.

You could help choose the poster that goes with the new Resident Evil movie. Last year fans were invited to submit designs and the contenders should now be up for online voting at www.resident-evil-the-movie.com.

During filming of the two Matrix sequels in Sydney last year, footage was also shot for the game, so the visuals should be totally pukka.

At the end of 2001, American sales figures for GameCube, PS2 and Xbox were released. PS2 was on top, with Nintendo coming in third – despite early reports that the GameCube was outselling the Xbox.

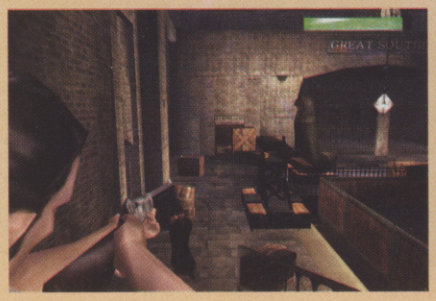
Channel Technology, which makes the Messiah chip that allows PS2 users to play 'copied' games as well as imports, has removed details of the chip from its website after Sony threatened legal action.

FOURSOME COMING YOUR WAY

Koched And Ready For An Explosive 2002

Horror, war, Halloween and medieval madness. No, it's not Les' holiday plans, it's what is in store for gamers later this year courtesy of up-and-coming UK publisher Koch Media.

CURSE Think The Mummy Returns set in London and blending Alone In The Dark-style shivers with Indiana Jones action. It's being developed for PS2, Xbox and PC.

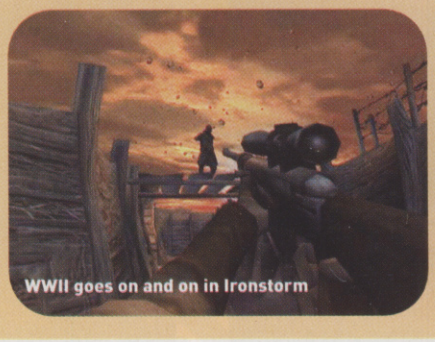


Curse: The Mummy Returns... without the licence

HALLOWEEN Platforms and puzzle-solving in a MediEvil style, reminiscent of Tim Burton's Nightmare Before Christmas. Slated for autumn release on PS2, GameCube and GBA.

Halloween: Bizarre, spooky platforming antics

IRONSTORM More warmongering, now in a parallel universe where WWII never ended. Instill peace, using tactics and stealth. Medal Of Honour, anyone? It'll be spreading gun goodness across PS2, Xbox and PC.



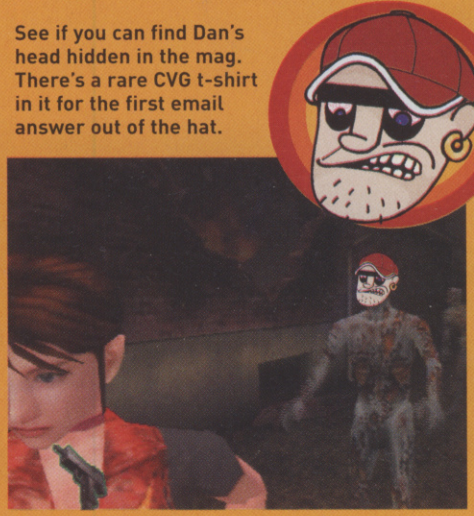
WWII goes on and on in Ironstorm

INQUISITION Fairly dangerous to write 'Metal Gear Solid in the 14th century' on your press release, 'cos you'll only get cynical people like us going, "Yeah, right." So, er, we'll see about this one, okay?

Medieval swords and stealthery epic awaits

Spot The Dan

See if you can find Dan's head hidden in the mag. There's a rare CVG t-shirt in it for the first email answer out of the hat.



Last issue Dan was sneaking up on Jill Valentine

PR Stunts We Love

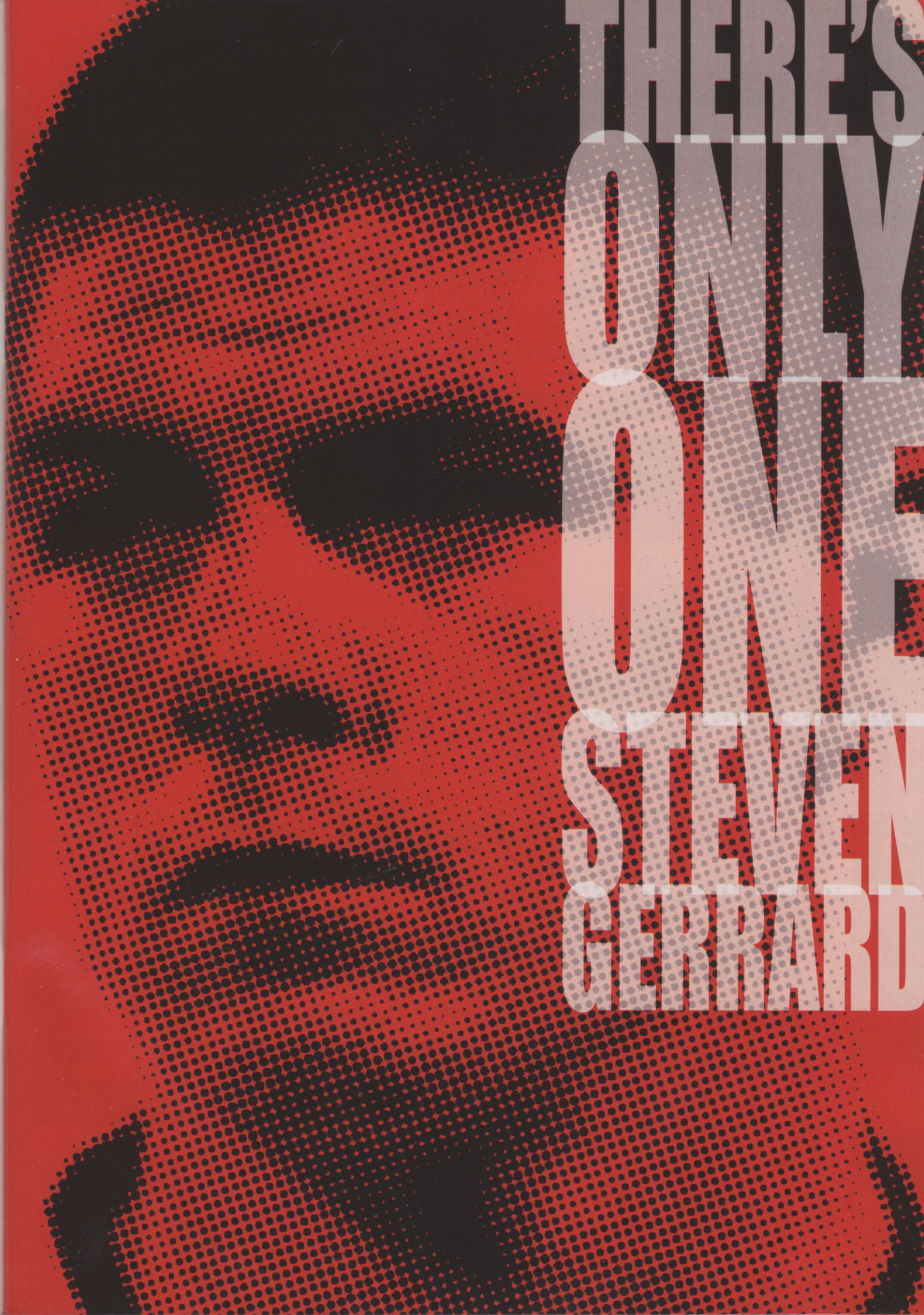
SPLASHDOWN (THE NORKS RETURN)

Not too many moons ago we brought you the heartwarming story of Splashdown's two page-three girls on a Sea-Doo PR stunt. It was certainly a goodie, but not as inspired as their latest, which features a poster showing the two models in wetsuits, pasted in central London.

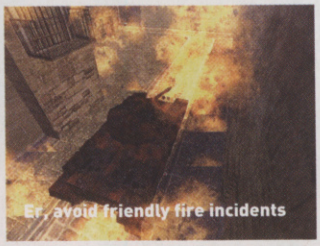
Seen one of these posters near you? If so, next time it rains, be sure to check it out

Gratuitous nudity in The Sun? Never

"So what?", we hear you ask. We'll tell you what: when it rains, off come the wetsuits on the posters to reveal bikinis beneath. It's the first ever weather-sensitive ad campaign! Genius.


THERE'S
ONLY
ONE
STEVEN
GERRARD

Norman Storms On



Er, avoid friendly fire incidents

Protect the missiles, soldier!

DESERT STORM – MORE INFO

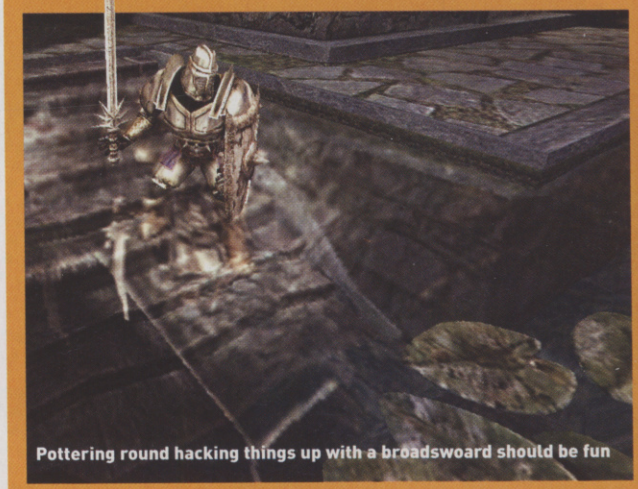
The Gulf War. US KIAs: 150. Iraqi KIAs: 150,000. This is gonna be solid

Conflict: Desert Storm is a new game based on the 1990 Gulf War coming to Xbox. And, it seems, now also to PS2 and PC.

We're talking third-person squad-based action, with you leading a team of experts into battle to carry out important missions like 'neutralising targets' and 'gathering intelligence'. Fortunately you have riflemen, snipers, electronics and infiltration experts in your team – plus the ability to switch between them.

As you'd expect for a game on PS2, Xbox and PC, the AI has been tweaked to within an inch of its skinny life, so your men will gain skills as the game goes on. Graphics look pin-sharp too. Expect to see it in May 2002.

ENCLAVE COMES TO XBOX



Pottering round hacking things up with a broadsword should be fun

Axe Invasion!

As if there weren't already enough dark, action-packed kill-a-thons on the Xbox, here comes another – Enclave.

Set in a fantasy world where *ahem* "people of light and darkness are separated by a bottomless rift", Enclave is basically 3D medieval combat that sees you belting all around massive, detailed levels, dismembering everything in sight. Cool, then. Even cooler when you know that the story can be played from two different perspectives (good or evil) and that the levels are peppered with bits of rusty hardware such as catapults, which are perfect for demolishing the scenery. Did we mention the armored pigs?

Big, armoured battle pigs don't frighten us. Okay, they do really

Multiplayer could involve some co-operative action, if we're lucky

Add a four-player split-screen multiplayer and an all-round good buzz on its debut last year, and we could be looking at a gory goodie.

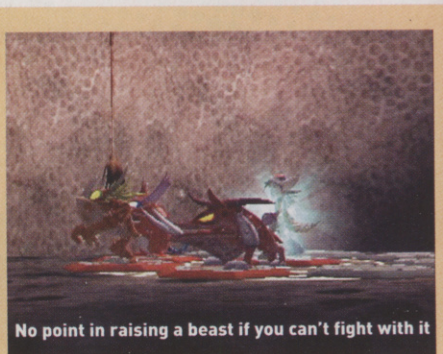
"Nature Finds A Way"

JADE COCOON 2 – FIRST PICS ON PS2

"What are you doing, you fool? You're messing with nature!" This is what people will shout at you in the street when they hear you've been playing Jade Cocoon 2.

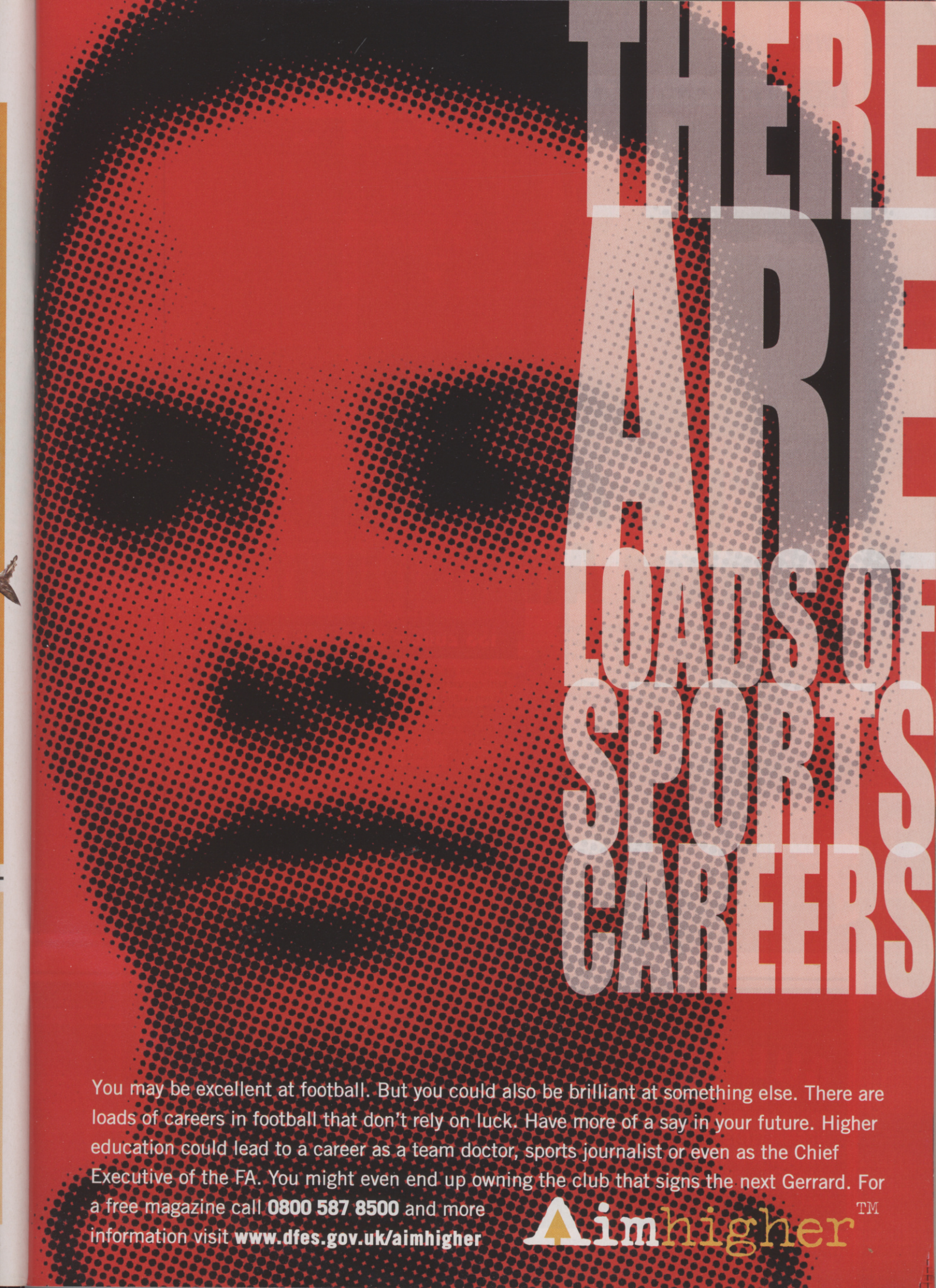
See, JC2 is a monster-raising game, and it's your job to do a Richard Attenborough-in-Jurassic-Park job on the various nasties you encounter while playing. What's that you say? A grown-up Pokemon? Well, you do get to combine your monsters, fight other monsters and 'refine the blood' by creating better, stronger generations of monsters. So, yeah, sort of. As for the monsters themselves, there are over 200 species.

The feel seems pretty tongue-in-cheek for JC2



No point in raising a beast if you can't fight with it

Though whether there's a "funny, handsome troll", as CVG's own Dan Payne likes to describe himself, remains to be seen. Either way, major changes will have been made since the first game, which, though it has acquired a bit of a cult following on PSone, wasn't a massive seller.



You may be excellent at football. But you could also be brilliant at something else. There are loads of careers in football that don't rely on luck. Have more of a say in your future. Higher education could lead to a career as a team doctor, sports journalist or even as the Chief Executive of the FA. You might even end up owning the club that signs the next Gerrard. For a free magazine call **0800 587 8500** and more information visit **www.dfes.gov.uk/aimhigher**

aimhigher™

"Any lower mate and the ref will blow for hand balls." ISS re-creates football's slap and tickle

Player animations look like being a highpoint in this version

"It's A Pressure Cooker Atmosphere"

Legendary Liverpool manager Bill Shankly once said, "Football is not a matter of life and death. It's far more important than that." He, of course, was referring to the actual game of football, in which twenty-two millionaires dash madly around a field in between bedroom 'romps' with Page Three girls.

But he could also have been referring to football the videogame, because while competition to dominate the thumbs of console footie fans has always been fierce, it's about to get white-hot – and it's down to ISS 2002.

The game has been announced for a PS2 release in March 2002, and it's being developed by Konami's Major A team, the guys behind ISS on N64 and the first PS2 ISS. So you can stay calm – it's in good hands. Things is, a strong rivalry exists between them and the KCET team, which is behind the superb PS2 knockabout, Pro Evolution Soccer.

So, if you've got two teams of genius football game developers trying to outdo each other, what do you get? Yup, you get better games, and PlayStation 2 owners can look forward to some serious football in the very near future.

ISS 2002 – WHAT WE KNOW

As far as we're concerned, ISS 2002 is going to have stiff competition in the shape of the wonderful PES. So what aces does the new boy have up its sleeve?

1. ITV's Jon Champion does the commentary
2. So does the BBC's Mark Lawrenson
3. Chelsea's stadium announcer Carl Chapman is in there too
4. There's a GameCube version planned, but who knows when it'll go into development...
5. It's got a new, improved focus on international football
6. And the player likenesses are better too
7. It's going to ROCK!

Close-ups look good, though

Hopefully control over set piece

DUMPED

TWO TEAMS OF INCOMPETENTS, ONE STRANGE AND EXOTIC LOCATION, FIRST HOME WINS. HELP DECIDE THEIR FATE...

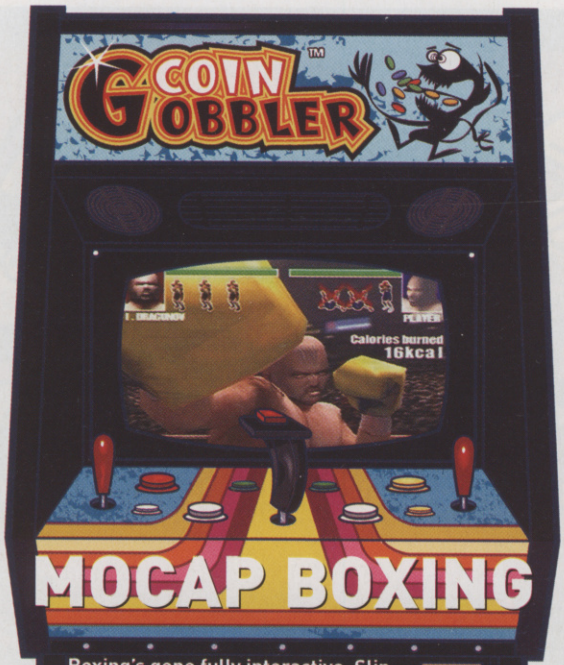
Team A arrive at the secret location, an island off the coast of Costa Rica

Team B try to get their bearings

Meanwhile...

nothing mind-blowing

ces will be better than in PES



MOCAP BOXING

Boxing's gone fully interactive. Slip on the special boxing gloves and sensors pick up the movements of your flailing fists and weaving body. It's sweet.

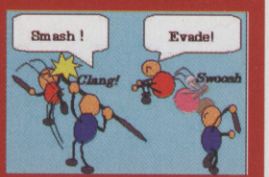
C&VG

The first-person action pits you against a series of bruisers. You have to bob and weave like Prince Naseem to keep your character on his feet. However, when the other guy throws a punch he leaves himself open and a target appears on his body, giving you a brief chance to counterattack. If you're seriously whuppin' ass, a 'Rush' target appears, enabling you to land massive combos of up to 50 punches.

Foot 'n' Mouth

Even the best-laid plans can go tits up in gaming land

Two entries this month: Dynasty Warriors 3 digital press release. Details the many new improvements to the latest episode of its fantasy fighter. "Even more bone-crushing moves!" they trumpeted. Er, but not improved graphics if their accompanying picture is anything to go by (above).

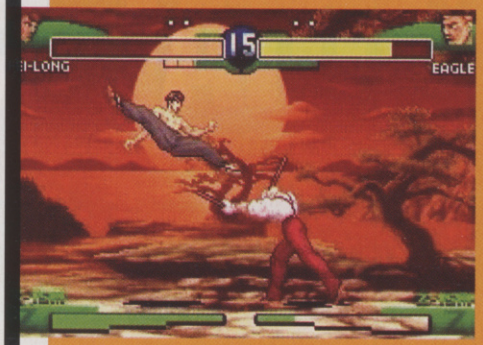


Boxed copies of Music Maker on PS2. "Tested by chart-topping producers," it says on the front. Turn over to see exactly who they are, you're greeted by a quote from – wait for it - DJ Scrot. Like, who he? And who is Larry Jones jr, who calls it "an absolute killer tool"? Mfffff.

NEWS SHORTS

Street Fighter's coming to your mobile phone. Due for release in 2002, it'll be available for WAP and SMS-enabled phones. How you're going to carry out combos on your keypad is anyone's guess.

Still with Street Fighter, check out this single shot of the soon-to-arrive Street Fighter Alpha 3 on GBA – should whet your appetite for its release in early 2002.



"If it wasn't for piracy I could double the staff in my shops," says Don McCabe of games retailer CHIPS. He's backing an ELSPA and Crimestoppers initiative urging you to shop counterfeiters. Sneaks, er, good citizens should call 0800 555 111.

Feel the power of Star Wars. LucasArts says Rogue Leader has shifted more units than any LucasArts game ever in the US, and become the GameCube's best-selling third-party title. We want it. NOW!

Is it a videogame or is it a photograph? The latest shots from the TOCA Race Driver camp suggest that the blokes behind the PC, PS2 and Xbox racer are hell-bent on blurring the line between games and reality. It's looking very tasty indeed.

omer is gripped by fear

Elsewhere...

A chance meeting of teams occurs

WHO WINS? WHO'LL BE BACK?

Email mailbag.cvg@dennis.co.uk

HOMER AND EDDIE
Mark email 'Team A'

ASH AND LI'L STREET FIGHTERS
Mark email 'Team B'

CACKMAN

TOTAL CEL OUT

2D is the new 3D? Hands up if you're sick of bleedin' cel-shading

It's official. Realistic 3D videogames are old hat. But don't go binning the old PlayStation 2 just yet. Bill Gates hasn't managed to invent a four dimensional graphical time machine. In fact, he's unlikely to bother even trying, seeing as the look of the moment is 2D.

I'm not talking about the current trend for knocking out crappy old mid-Eighties computer games for Game Boy Advance, and then claiming they've got 'pocket-sized retro-appeal'. Oh no, that's next month's topic. I'm referring to the hot new vogue for cel-shaded games.

For the unfashionable among you, cel-shading is a technique that gives 3D graphics a cartoon look, adding a sharp outline to characters and objects, stripping away the lighting and flattening the colours. In other words, making 3D look like 2D. Me, I don't understand what all the fuss is about as I always thought the Sega Saturn had that particular feat cracked six years ago.

In fact, it all started with Jet Set Radio on Dreamcast. This game didn't actually invent the technique, but it was certainly the culprit responsible for making it 'cool'. After that, the games industry was blown away when, at this year's Tokyo Spaceworld, Shigeru Miyamoto revealed that he'd transformed the awesome super-realistic Link from last year's Zelda demo into a childish cel-shaded kid's drawing. "He's a genius," journalists yelled. "It's going to be the best thing ever," said Art Attack magazine, while offering a handy free pack of crayons to every reader.

Since then the plot has thickened substantially. And alas, so have the outlines. Sega revealed the Xbox version of its hardcore horror series, House Of The Dead 3, looking more like an episode of Scooby Doo. Meanwhile, though details of Capcom's upcoming driving game, Auto Modellista, are sketchy, the fact that it's cel-shaded means we can be certain its details will indeed be... sketchy.

So what next? Cel Calibur? Metal Gear Cel-lid? Tony Hawk's Pro Sketcher? Surely it's only a matter of time before all our games are designed by the guy that draws Garfield. But then, maybe Cackman's just being cynical. After all, driving games without depth? Flat shoot 'em ups? Nothing new there, the only difference is they now look the part.

Anyway, gotta go now. Cackman's off to see the Gorillaz play live. With PaRappa as support...

Cel shading: a cynical marketing ploy? My little brother draws better than that at playschool

DENTED SALES

Word has it that a few disgruntled customers have been returning their copies of the excellent PS2 crash-fest, Burnout. Why? Because while the box claims it has 14 courses, they discovered "it's actually got only three which are mirrored, reversed and had a few extra bits added". Cackman can't help but agree. He recently returned Tekken Tag in disgust, after finding out there are really only three moves – punch, kick and throw. And, appallingly, Tetris has only seven shapes, which you have to rotate to fit into gaps. A bloody disgrace!

Burnout: a revolution in gameplay

CACK TO THE POOTURE

If 2D is the new 3D, what's next? Here are a few tips for developers looking beyond the cel-by date.

Lens Flare
Sod real-time and specular lighting, just stick some glare on screen. It worked for Earthworm Jim.

Lo-Res
Faces made from a maximum eight pixels are iconic. Take Mario. For his Donkey Kong debut, he looked like a prawn eating a ginger turd.

Paddles
Screw analogue sticks and shoulder buttons, a simple dial is all we need. Especially great for tennis games.

Wood
Make consoles out of timber. And pull them around on a piece of string. If it's good enough for the Victorians...

Crash Test

WE TRY IT OUT SO YOU DON'T GET LUMPED WITH ADD-ON ARSE

TFT SCREEN PACK

By: Joytech
Cost: £100

This is excellent value for money. The 5" PSone screen is far superior to any other third-party screen available and the image quality is absolutely blinding. Stereo sound is impressive too and the kit comes with a car adaptor, memory card and natty little joypad. It's all you could need for quality portable PlayStation playing. Outstanding.

★★★★★★★★★★

REAL ARCADE GUN

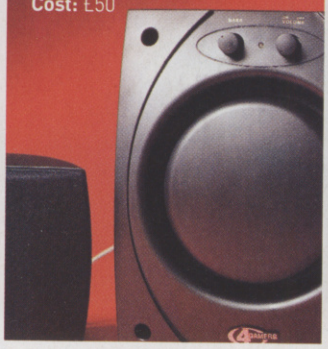
By: Joytech
Cost: £20

This gun is perfect for PSone gun games and also works with Time Crisis II on PS2. It's chunky, clunky and pretty heavy but then it's supposed to recreate the true arcade gun experience. With optional mains-powered recoil it does the job fine but, the lack of a d-pad on the gun makes it unsuitable for some PS2 shooters.

★★★★★★★★★★

2.1 SPEAKER SYSTEM

By: 4gamers
Cost: £50



Beef up your PS2 sounds with this speaker set. Features nice bass rumbles and the satellite speakers are crystal clear, but it's an expensive way of improving your audio experience and probably not worth bothering with if you've got a halfway decent TV already. Not bad, but not a patch on true digital surround sound kits.

★★★★★★★★★★

WINGMAN CORDLESS PAD

By: Logitech
Cost: £40

Another month, another Wingman pad. This latest version of the popular PC pad is cordless with a five-metre range and has twin analog sticks in addition to the eight buttons and d-pad. The force feedback works incredibly well for a smaller sized joypad and it feels perfect in your palms. Pricey maybe, but impressive.

★★★★★★★★★★

electronics EB boutique

MULTI-FORMAT TOP SELLERS

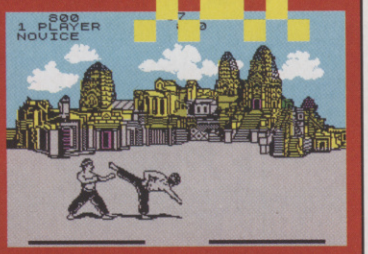
1	Harry Potter	(PS, PC, GBA, GBC)
2	Grand Theft Auto III	(PS2)
3	Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	(PS, GBC, PS2)
4	FIFA 2002	(PS2, PS, PC)
5	007: Agent Under Fire	(PS2)
6	World Rally Championship	(PS2)
7	Devil May Cry	(PS2)
8	WWF SmackDown! Just Bring It	(PS2)
9	Pokemon Crystal	(GBC)
10	Pro Evolution Soccer	(PS2)

OLD SKOOL

How it used to be...

15 YEARS AGO
March '87

FIST II
Format: Spectrum, C64
The original Way Of The Exploding Fist was – for a time – the best fighter on 8-bit computers. The sequel became a scrolling beat 'em up with 21 combat moves and 120 frames of animation – unheard of at the time.



IMPOSSABALL. Format: Spectrum
Back when bouncing balls were all the rage, this Marble Madness-inspired puzzler was a winner.

ELEVATOR ACTION. Format: C64, Spectrum
Break in to the enemy HQ, steal secrets and avoid guards. Sound familiar, Solid Snake?

HACKER II. Format: C64, Spectrum
Why try breaking into banks when you can spy on the Russians and save the world?

10 YEARS AGO
March '92

DESERT STRIKE: RETURN TO THE GULF
Format: Mega Drive, SNES

The war in the Gulf was left unfinished. Maybe a game could finish off the job? As a helicopter pilot, you might just make the difference in the battle against General Killbaba (a thinly-disguised Saddam Hussein). A great shoot 'em up.

TERMINATOR 2. Format: Mega Drive, SNES
The mag went Terminator 2 crazy, with a competition to win the shirt off Arnie's back – no, really!

INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS. Format: PC
Indy embarks on his greatest computer adventure.

FINAL LAP II. Format: Arcade
Namco's greatest racer since Pole Position, thanks to link-up racing that would revive the arcades.

5 YEARS AGO
March '97

SUPER MARIO 64.
Format: N64
Super Mario 64 heralds the arrival of the Nintendo 64 in the UK. CVG proclaimed it the 'must have game of the decade' and we still stand by that.

Tekken 3. Format: Arcade
A first look at Namco's stunning coin-op. Even then we knew it was going to be something very special.

Turok. Format: N64
Classy first-person shooter, big on exploration and explosions.

Time Crisis. Format: PSone
State-of-the-art arcade shooter makes it onto PlayStation with the thrills intact. Pity the gun didn't have recoil though.

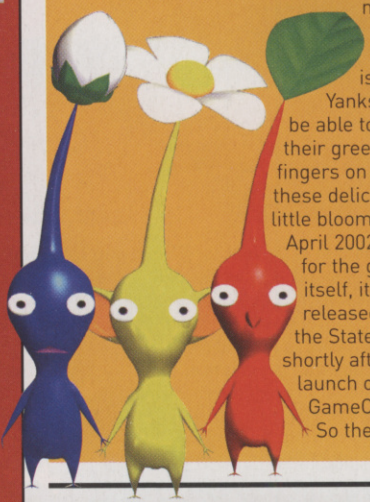
ALERT! BAD PUN AHEAD

Leaf It Out!

If bald men can sell advertising space on their heads, then why not flowers, eh? Surely the poor little photosynthesising blighters deserve a piece of the action. Well, now they've got it. Nintendo America has joined forces with a seed manufacturer to score the world's first flower named after a videogame character – Pikmin.

You thought the nasty pun was in the headline, right? Wrong! It's in this quote from Nintendo's sales and marketing executive vice-president Peter Main. Ready? Steel yourselves...

"We used a variety of innovative and unusual activities to build anticipation for the Nintendo GameCube. Naming a flower after a videogame is just one more way Nintendo is 'seeding' creative marketing." Ouch.



For all you keen gardeners out there, the five-petalled Pikmin flower is a member of the plant genus Sutera. Yanks will be able to get their green fingers on one of these delicate little blooms as of April 2002. As for the game itself, it was released in the States shortly after the launch of the GameCube. So there.

Grow your own Pikmin at home

Fence-sitters of the world be warned

Shaking hands is so old fashioned

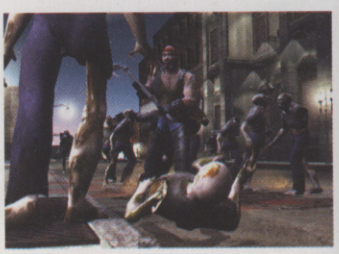
"Flesh For Tea, Darling?

HUNTER: THE RECKONING SHOTS

For anyone who's ever wished Resident Evil was shorter on clue-finding and longer on zombie-shooting, we give you Hunter: The Reckoning.

Exclusive to Xbox, Hunter is basically George Romero's Dawn Of The Dead done in a game. Slaughter literally thousands of zombies across heaps of levels. Expect head-shredding weapons and even the odd dose of magic. And anticipate Xbox graphics so sharp you'll be begging your TV for mercy. All that and a killer four-player mode to boot.

We fully expect Hunter: The Reckoning to rock in a big way. It's released in the States in March 2002, so we'll get it sometime 2200.



It's a zombie abbatoir out there

IF YOU'VE GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO CONTROL A 500CC FUEL GUZZLING MONSTER WITH PINPOINT PRECISION AT A SPEED OF AROUND 200MPH LEANING SO FAR OVER YOUR FACE IS JUST ONE TREACHEROUS INCH FROM THE GROUND THEN YOU'RE IN FOR A GREAT NECK WRENCHING EXPERIENCE.

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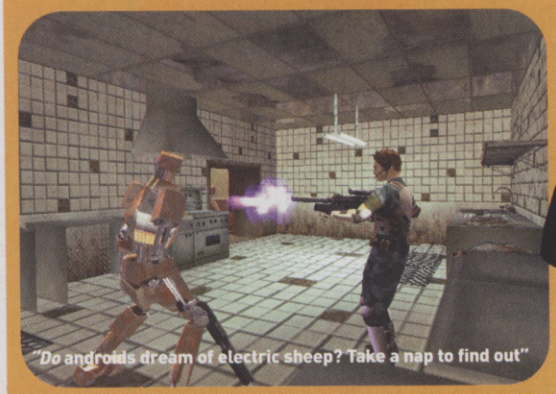
"Come With Me If You Want To Live"

PS2 RE-TERMINATOR!

We won't waste words: just have a good old ogle at these brand new screens from upcoming PS2 shooter, Terminator: Dawn Of Fate – yes, that's THE Terminator.

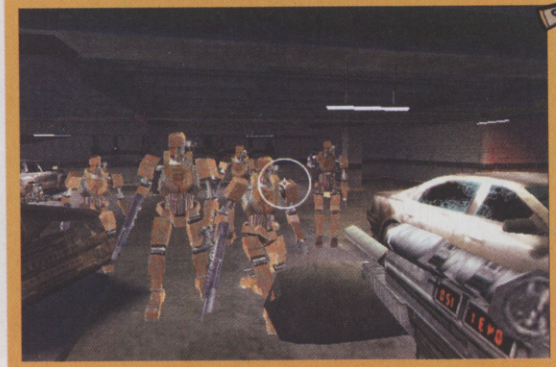
It's 2029 and you play John Connor, battling Skynet, Terminators and all kinds of metal nasties. It's due for release in the spring – we'll bring you more info soon...



"Do androids dream of electric sheep? Take a nap to find out"

Now, to glaze a creme brulee

Hmm. Battlestar Galactica?



They've come a long way since appearing on the Mega Drive

WE MAKE THIS MAG

Meet CVG

Mike Cooper, Writer

Mike's New Year's resolution: "Must spend less time playing games and more with my woman." Lasted under 24 hours. Founding member of GA (Gamers Anonymous)

Les Ellis, Games Editor

The Grim Reaper's li'l bro is still polishing his new gladiator-style Code Scythe™ for hunting down elusive software lost in the jungle... of his drawer.

Jenny McComb, Designer

"What's with all these Japanese faux mulleted heroes? Raiden, Dante, Eike, Tidus..." bawled Jen. "Get over it," said Dan.

Dan Payne, Art Editor

Dreamt up a new gaming concept – the Disposable Console™ – but Sega already had the patent. Almost as good as his restaurant idea, The Edible Pantie.

Alex Simmons, Editor

Playing Rez endlessly, claiming it soothes his post-Xmas hangover. Despite having been back at work for ages and the rest of us finishing it in under an hour. Curious.

Pete Walker, Deputy Editor

Finally got super-fast ADSL Net connection installed at home. Pete: "It's purely for reviewing work, of course." Everyone else: "Bollocks." Pete: "Grr."

Lee Skittrell, Senior Writer

The Lord Of The Rings tipped him over the edge. Again. Required treatment to remove lady's fur hats glued to his toes. "They amputated my hobbit feet!" he wailed.

computer and video GAMES

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Because she won't be wearing this, make sure you wear a condom.

You can't tell from looking at a girl if she has a Sexually Transmitted Infection.
So remember, when your kit comes off, make sure a condom goes on.

sex

Are you thinking about it enough?

If you're under 18 and need advice about sex or contraception, call Sexwise on 0800 28 29 30 or visit us at www.ruthinking.co.uk The call is free and confidential.

Textphone (for people with hearing impairments) 0800 328 1651.

UNREAL INVASION

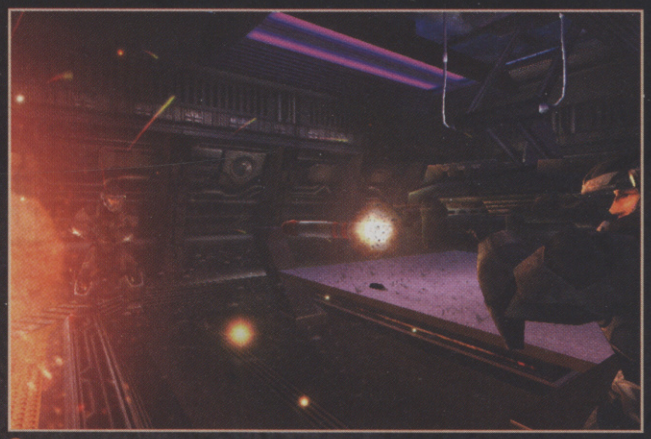
They toppled the king of shooters. Now they're back. And they're multiplying...

First there was Wolfenstein. And Doom, Doom 2 and Quake 2. Well, you get the idea. A few years ago, the concept of a first-person shooter that could beat id Software's titans was, frankly, unreal. As it turned out, it was. Epic Games released Unreal in 1998 and blew gamers away. Many considered it better than the then reigning king of the hill, Quake II, except for one factor – multiplayer deathmatches were a bit weak.

The solution came a year later. Unreal Tournament was a multiplayer tour de force. Many thought it fragged Quake III into second place, and it still dominates the Internet. But Epic hasn't been camping out on its success. The sequels are coming. CVG has witnessed both. Time to offload both barrels into your slack-jawed mouth...

UNREAL II

Serious space-marine armour, now in three handy sizes



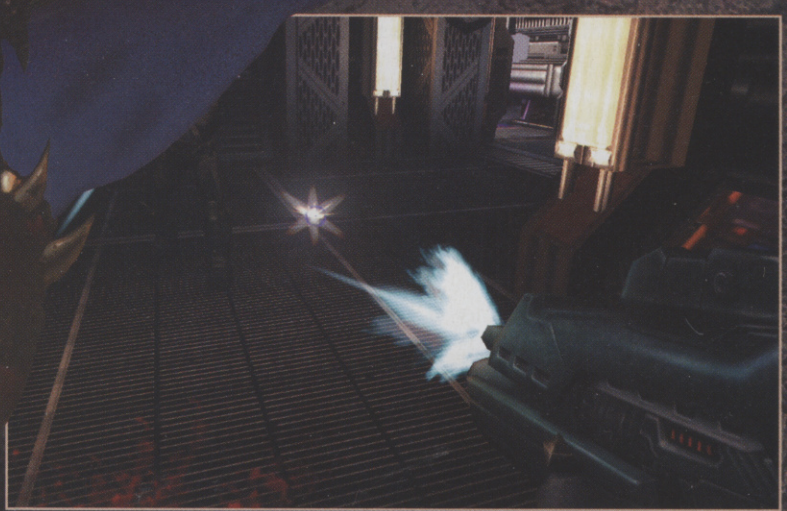
Volumetric lighting + particle-effect smoke = the most-realistic rockets

DOUBLY UNREAL

In Unreal you were a deep-space prisoner, crashed on an alien world. Unreal II is set in the same universe, only you're a law enforcement officer, cruising space in your interstellar corvette, Atlantis. Of course, things soon go wrong and you head planet-side armed with some serious weaponry.

One complaint about original Unreal was that the weapons, while cool, were too... unreal. Too alien. Now you get the best of both worlds. 15 tools of destruction ranging from old friends like the shotgun, sniper rifle, machine-gun, rocket launcher and grenade launcher (which, in turn, can be loaded with different grenades: toxic, fragment or EMPs for shorting circuitry).

But after a few close encounters (of the third kind), you'll soon pack more exotic heat like the leech gun. Keep it aimed at the enemy and it sucks their health to you. As in all Unreals, each weapon has a primary and secondary function, and true masters can combo up their shots – launching a slow projectile, then hitting it with a fast weapon to devastating effect.



Expect some of the coolest weaponry you'll have ever handled in a first-person shooter

TELL TALES

What about the plot then? For obvious reasons it has to remain extremely secret, but what beans we've seen, we'll spill. The gameplay is totally non-linear, with few A-to-B scenarios. Instead you're involved in tactical situations like attack or rescue. And, as is the current vogue, there are squad-based levels where you team up with mercs or marines for serious onslaughts.

One example is a fortress you have to protect from an enemy army. You command your squad to guard various entry points, but they'll head back to health posts when needed. They also remain in constant radio contact, updating you, even calling for help. So your actions are driven by where you're urgently needed – running to a penetrated location to save the day, before heading off to another distress call. It's highly rewarding.

Format:PC
Out: Spring 2002
Developer: Legend/Epic
Publisher: Infogrames

The true follow-up to Unreal is scheduled for a spring 2002 release. And from what we've seen, it's bang on target. Unreal II is the work of Legend Entertainment, which created the Unreal Mission Pack, but Epic is keeping a close watch.

The result is faster, better and up to 100 times more detailed than the original. For deathmatch addicts there's an incredible multiplayer mode, but that's just the side order. As with the original game, single-player is the Unreal deal here, and Legend is confident it's the best story-driven game you'll play. Better than Half-life, better even than Halo.

Glance up while in-game and this is the kind of stuff you'll see. And it's all real-time

You get to order these boys around in some squad missions

Cool animation. Oh, he's on your side, which means you probably ought to turn around

Another fantastic level is a planet covered by just one giant organism. The very ecosystem of the planet is dictated by this creature's existence. However, colonists have planted atmosphere generators on the surface and even carved a road through the creature. When you arrive, the planet is in chaos due to the beast's pain, and you have to clamber down a distinctly Sarlaac-looking hole (we have our suspicions as to its function) to battle alien parasites and colonial marines, all inside an incredible cathedral-sized pulsating gut.

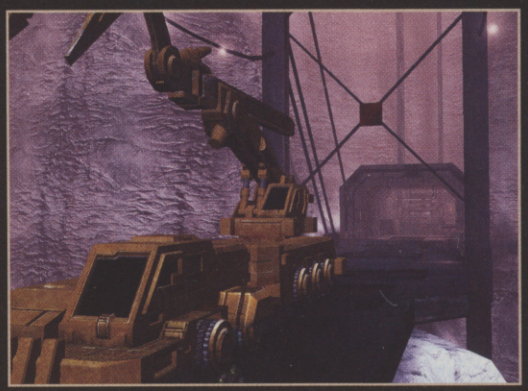
ARGH, IT'S THE SKAARJ

A different stage sees you rescuing scientists from old Unreal foes, the Skaarj (the only creatures from the original). Everyone moves around frantically, telling you they're okay or hiding behind furniture. You can order them to remain or follow, while they return advice or gratefully offer health boosts. You're convincingly in the thick of it.

Finally, there's a level that shows how twisty the plot is set to be. Arriving at a merc ship for a vital trade-off, you're double-crossed by the pirate leader who has already given the artifact you're after to an underwater race known as the Shin. Locked in a shielded prison, the Shin's psychic voice echoes out, beckoning you to join them. The guard slumps unconscious and the shield switches off. Now it's just a drop in the ocean to meet the mysterious race, only we weren't allowed to see anymore. Gah!

NUMBER OF THE BEASTS

Luckily, we did witness the Shin and other creatures, thanks to a demo called 'The Alien Zoo'. Contained in each cell (which the developer humorously locked after leaving) were various races, each separated into light, medium and heavy forms. The human heavy marine can carry the rocket launcher in one hand, while the lighter trooper can barely lug it. The Scaarj, a sort of giant lizard race, don't carry weapons but get increasingly spikey and armoured.



There are colony environments with working machinery

Then there are the imaginative new species. The Izarians look reminiscent of the movie Alien, with four arms and two legs. They travel in packs. The Arachnids are clearly inspired by the Starship Troopers bugs. And the Shin look like floating Jellyfish, needing lobster-style shells to keep their consistency.

The pay-off of these races (and the many we haven't seen) is the variety of multiplayer characters. There are eight ready-made faces per creature, plus you can mix and match attachments like belt radios or glowing kneepads. The Scaarj, for example, sport clan markings on their chest, and you can modify any parts to create your look.

COMMAND AND CONQUER

Which brings us to multiplayer. Like all first-person shooters there's set to be Deathmatch and Capture The Flag modes. But the big difference is that in teamplay each side has a device called the Replicator, which builds your team's weapons. Take control of energy sources

SUPER MODELS

We won't get too techy, but you need to know about the realism of Unreal II. During a demo, Legend showed how Aida's head instantly follows the mouse arrow. All while she's breathing and talking (with her lips not pre-mapped to the words). So, characters can react uniquely to any situation. Most impressive were the particle effects (any moving system, like rain or fire). The demo showed an updraft of totally realistic steam catching the light. Then a rocket was fired through it, shifting the smoke perfectly. Imagine spraying a flame-thrower at a guy's swishing beard, and him trying to put it out. That's the idea...

This is Aida. She looks real, she moves real, she sounds real. But she isn't real. Go meet real girls

Such detail, it's almost a shame to blow him up. But wait until you see his innards!

around levels to increase Replicator speed and tech level, allowing you to develop more advanced weapons. You may even be able to build gun turrets and forcefields.

Legend is considering allowing the player guarding the Replicator to decide which weapons are made. Although a total comedian could just give his team javelins to fight with. Whatever the final result though, the online multiplayer mode is set to be awesome in its own right, so if you never want to play in single-player you won't feel short-changed. But if multiplayer carnage really is your bag, perhaps the second Unreal sequel over the page will fit the bill better.

CLEVER CLOGS

Unreal II's non-player characters are smarter than that kid in AI. And we were shown the secret. Like roads, they follow invisible tracks on the floor, choosing which paths to take. Depending on the settings, a bot can refuse to leave his post, or decide the rocket launcher is more important than taking on enemy, even backing off before firing it. One bot leapt from a lethally high ledge instead of hitting the stairs – knowing he'd land on the health pick-up. Very smart.

You'll be able to customise your armour in multiplayer mode, right down to the kneepads

Your dropship leaving you behind. You'll wish you'd been a bit more civil to your crew now...

SHIP SHAPE

The backstory about cruising in your starship is more than self-indulgent sci-fi pap. In between missions you get to hang around the Atlantis in first-person mode – a bit like on the Voyager in Elite Force, only this time it's cool. Lie in your quarters, decorated with souvenirs brought back from missions, play with the ship mascot, a weird virtual pet called the Sea Goat, check the computers, or converse with crew members. They react accordingly. If you're short with them, they'll be tight-lipped with you.

And the game remembers. Saying "Hi" as you pass in the corridor makes all the difference. With sexy intelligence officer Aida, you'll want to make that effort. The characters are ten times more detailed than in Unreal, clocking around 5000 polygons each. We'd say 3000 went into Aida's norks. However, if you want to keep Unreal strictly action-only, just skip past. This section isn't essential, it's just there to add to the whole experience.

UNREAL

This is the ultra-cool detail you can expect online, next year

Format: PC
Out: Summer/Autumn 2002 TBC
Developer: Digital Extreme/Epic
Publisher: Infogrames

Until we saw UTII in action, no-one in the world (except those working on it) knew the game existed. Check the developer, Digital Extreme's, website. Not a mention. But exist it does and, considering it won't be finished for another six months, it's in an amazingly advanced state. We know, we've played it. For hours. And it rocks!

As with Unreal II, UT2 is being overseen by Epic Games, although Digital Extremes were co-creators of the first Tournament too. They know what makes a good online frag-fest, and what needs to be improved. What you see here proves that.

Action so intense, you still won't stop to admire the scenery

Previous complaints about boring characters have been heeded

Lovely animation, even when he flies backwards in chunks!

TOURNAMENT II

ROGUES GALLERY

Some thought original Tournament's characters weren't too... interesting. Well, pop these characters in your crosshair and frag 'em. There are six races. The familiar Humans, Aliens from a forest world, giant Robots living in a space station, Egyptians from a desert planet, and blubbery Juggernauts from an ice kingdom.

But, it's the final race who are guaranteed to be most popular – gothic-styled Nightmare creatures from a lava-swamped Hell world. One model resembles a cross between The Joker and The Crow, another has its eyes sewn shut, and an eyeball in the mouth. Nice. There's 50 different skins, with 26 different player shapes and two faces per character. More than enough to express your individuality. Low-end PC users can scale down the quality, but mega-PC owners can push the detail so hair and spikes move. Even two years after release, Digital Extremes is confident it will be state-of-the-art.

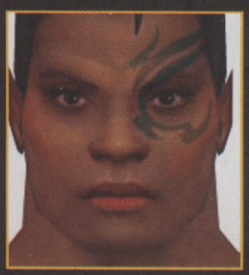
The Nightmare race

An Alien

Spike from 911

Egyptian totty

The Robot race


Trek Fatima Whitbread?

Don't fancy yours much

Trying to be individual

Glandular fever sufferer

Your mum

DANCING WITH DEATH

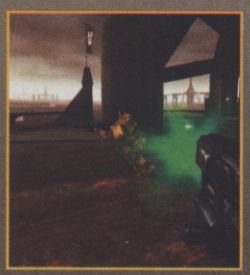
Chuck the opposition about like rag dolls

Let's face it, killing is the objective and now there's more death animation than ever, letting you bounce enemies off walls or just drop 'em neatly. Thanks to UTII's scaleable-detail character skeletal systems and a new feature called the Maths Engine, top-end PC owners may see much more. As we did in a demo resembling a virtual abattoir: one shot had a guy topple down some stairs; another flicked his arm up, a third slid him to the bottom. In another scene, bodies were dangling from the ceiling by one arm and shooting spun them around. You could even topple oil drums onto enemies, or skid them around on friction-free floors. Sick but sweet!

See, Maths is fun. It lets you realistically humiliate the dead

COMBO AND FRIES!

Original UT featured a controversial dodge move. Tap twice sideways and you leapt out the way. Long-term players couldn't do without it, and now there's more combos. When you kill someone, they release Bio-Energy. Collect it and when you tap forwards three times you hit super-speed. Backwards three times to go beserk (think Quad damage). We found ourselves using these features continuously, although they were fiddly.


Super-speed may have just saved that fella's life

These guys are combining their power with the Link Gun

SHOOTING RANGE

The weapons. There are 10 in all, and you start each match with the lot! Trust us, you won't miss the old tools of the trade.

THE IMPACT HAMMER

Not instantly recognisable. Apart from the obvious clout, it now fires a beam. Secondary function is a shield that bounces back enemy fire.

ASSAULT RIFLE

Off-loads normal bullets. Secondary function allows you to play around with grenades.

LINK GUN

Set to be a fave. Fires a beam like UT's Pulse Gun, but in secondary mode you can aim at a team-mate, doubling his Link power. The more the merrier. But, like Ghostbusters, cross the streams and you're dead.

SHOCK RIFLE

Similar to the original. Fire a beam or a slow energy ball, then hit the ball with the beam for a hardcore follow-up.

MINIGUN

The heaviest weapon. Offloads a rapid rotation of bullets, or fires six shots at once.

FLAK CANNON

Sprays bouncing shards about. In secondary mode it fires the shards in cluster form before exploding.

ROCKET LAUNCHER

This time the launcher can only load up three missiles in secondary mode. The balance being, there's no delay time when launching normally. Deal with it!

LIGHTNING GUN

The replacement for the Sniper Rifle. Your target will now be able to follow the lightning flash back to the source Tribes 2 style – so no lurking. In secondary mode it lets you zoom with a crazy visual effect (currently similar to Predator vision).

WOT NO REDEEMER?

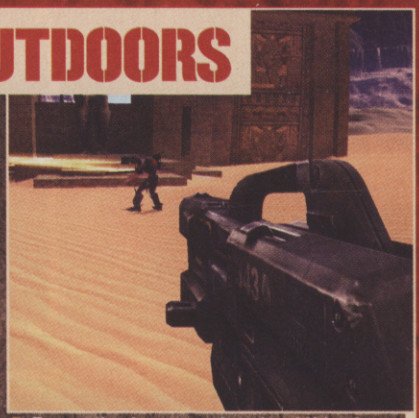
Don't worry, there are Super Weapons planned that make the old boy look like a toothpick. One features a nuclear disk that you guide (similar to the Big R), but beeps to warn it's coming. The second, known as the Ion Cannon, is clearly inspired by military events. It's a laser, but tag someone with the harmless beam and you can call down destruction from an orbiting satellite. There's also another, as yet unannounced, mega-weapon to reveal.

THE WILD CARD

Another departure from the old skool of shooters is the ammo pick-ups. Now you don't have to wait around for a measly box of grenades, any dispenser will top up your chosen weapon. There's also Wild Card bases, the only sites that unlock the Super Weapons. Any new player-created guns can be loaded in them too!

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Unsurprisingly, one key feature of UTII is the vast outdoor terrains, and the sheer scale of the landscapes is staggering. There are five different worlds (possibly more), each with its own environment. Roll your eyes at the concept of ice, lava, forests etc, but when you see them you'll understand. Thanks to the ever-evolving Unreal Engine, you can flatten the snow. Take potshots in the desert and sand flies up. Run through a pool and you carve ripples. Next they'll be sneaking in treadable dog poo.



Expect the desert sands to be shifting in the final version

BUILDING A BETTER WORLD

Previously, building levels has always been the domain of tech-heads. Not anymore, thanks to the Level Constructor. Built into UTII, it's as easy to use as LEGO, with every piece from the game. All the sections just lock together. Plop in the lighting, and brush in effects like water or snow, before setting their physics. Just one reason why UTII is going to send the online community insane!

Stick some mountains in the background. Or a city

Reckon you can build levels like this?

All the in-game objects are useable. Even statues

CHUMS

Even if you're Billy No-Mates, UTII will cater for your multiplayer fetish. Better than before, it's set to contain bots that improve using Accuracy/Tactics/Agility ratings. There's even a team management mode. As you move up the ranks, your salary cap increases, letting you buy better players. DE admit this was inspired by future sports classic, Speedball 2. Funny that, because aside from the usual multiplayer modes, there's one called Bombing Run, where you pass a live bomb like a rugby ball to score at the enemy base.

They act real, but you can't socialise with bots

Don't expect the bots to just stand around like this

Capturing the Flag with these bots will be intense

WHY WALK?

Maybe it's because of Halo, but now we love vehicles in shooters. There's four planned for UTII. You don't need them for long distances, solely to be cool. One even features a side-car that you can leap on as it passes. And if it's driven by an enemy you can battle them on the move.

Now even games characters won't get any exercise

UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP

Format: Xbox
Out: TBC
Developer: Digital Extreme
Publisher: Infogrames

Particles? Lighting? Piece of piss on Xbox

Completely new characters and weapons for the Xbox

Expect some serious terrain in Championship

The Unreal experience for Xbox gamers. Features all-new weapons, characters and levels. We didn't play the latest version, but interesting facts were revealed about the brilliant Halo style controls. When you steer the analog stick in Halo, it has two movement circles, close-up and wide area. UC will also feature velocity. The faster you slam the stick, the quicker you spin round. Thanks to the upcoming broadband kit, this is also going to be a major online game.

Backpackers. Always nuisance on the train

Flares will be back in again in time for its release

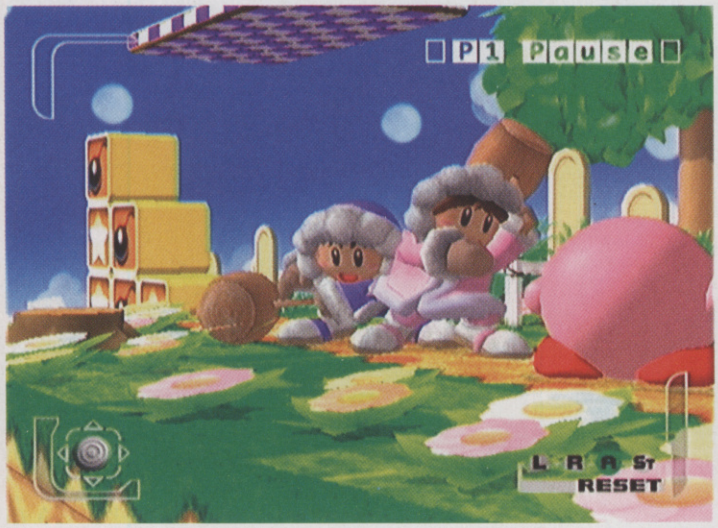
Like he could really hold that with one arm

UNREAL WARFARE

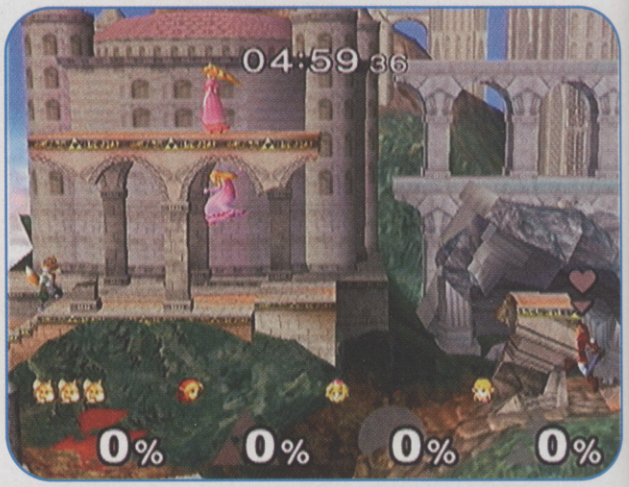
Format: PC
Out: TBC
Developer: Epic
Publisher: Infogrames

Being worked on by Epic, many are hailing this as the true Unreal 3. Little is known, but the name suggest massive multiplayer potential. It's said the Maths Engine plays a vital role. Imagine running through an overgrown cornfield. If other players have trampled down paths, you're more likely to run through these. It's details like this that Warfare promises.

PREVIEWS



The explosive blocks in Kirby's stage are useful for knocking out your opponents



Most of the battles take place from this distant viewpoint, making it somewhat difficult to follow the fast-paced action at times

SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE

FORMAT: **GAMECUBE** OUT: **NOW (US) TBC (UK)** DEVELOPER: **HAL LABORATORY** PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**

For Nintendo fans, Super Smash Bros Melee is simply the biggest and messiest wet dream you'll ever have. All the Big N's most famous heroes and villains, from Mario to Bowser and from Zelda to Ganondorf, are limbering up for this GameCube brawler, which boasts some of the best graphics, backgrounds and music ever seen in a fighting game. Yup, we're quite excited about this one...

SUPER, SMASHING, GREAT

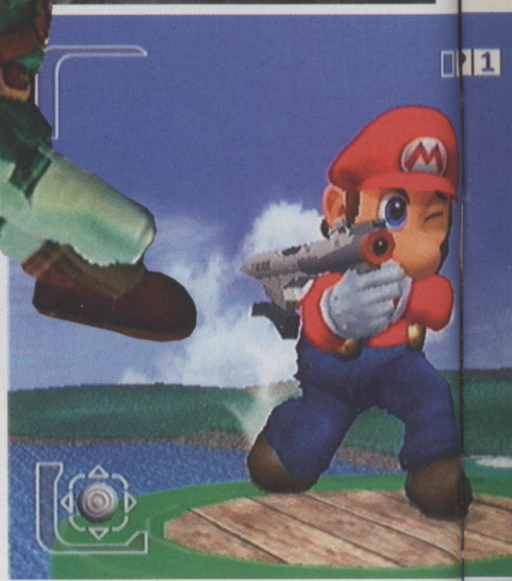
Super Smash Bros Melee builds on the successful formula established by Super Smash Bros, a game which appeared during the twilight years of the N64.

Smash Bros injected fun into fighting games and introduced mind-numbingly fast multiplayer battles in which up to four gamers could grab a slice of the action. Melee is essentially the same as its N64 cousin, with players trying to inflict sufficient damage on their rivals to knock them off the edge of the floating arenas and into oblivion. This GameCube version's been beefed up with extra options, new weapons and gameplay modes, but fans of the original will feel at home due to its simple control system.

Inflicting significant damage sees you using 'smash' moves by swinging the analog stick in your opponent's direction and hitting the attack

Link is tough but he still uses a flower as a weapon

There are also themed 'event' battles



The detail on the characters is amazing, especially

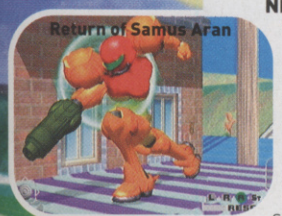
Ooh, you cow! Princess gets nasty

Fox McCloud and Link combine powers

Bowser is one of the biggest and slowest characters in the game, and he's completely rubbish at jumping

"Typical. No decent heroes for ages then loads at once"

Pikachu: how cute?



when they're using weapons

button. However, landing a successful smash has been made more difficult, as there are plenty of new defensive options, allowing you to block attacks with your normal shield, return projectiles with the new deflective moves or even side-step punches and kicks.

NINTENDO FAN CLUB

Smash Bros is great fun and easy to play, but its most impressive feature is the colourful world it creates: a vibrant yet familiar place in which Ninty nuts will think they've died and gone to heaven.

All the biggest names from Nintendo's back catalogue feature in Melee, with old favourites such as Link and Yoshi rubbing shoulders and exchanging stiff punches with newcomers Pikachu and Jigglypuff. Aficionados will also be pleased to hear that a few characters from the distant past of console gaming have been resurrected for a GameCube outing, including Ness from the Super NES RPG Earthbound and Samus Aran from the Metroid series.

Each character is crisp, detailed and colourful, which can be fully appreciated when you pause the game and rotate the camera around the 3D models.

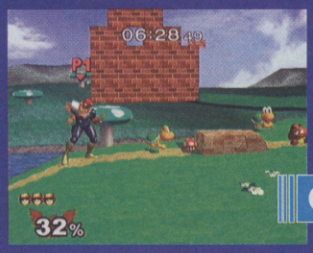
The attention to detail is quite astounding, right down to the fighters' facial expressions. For example, when Mario fires a shot from the Super Scope, he closes one eye to look through the gun sight, and his body leans forward to brace itself for the recoil. It really does look awesome.

The backgrounds will also feel familiar to Nintendo heads, with fighting arenas which pay homage to games as diverse as Super Mario World, The Legend Of Zelda: Majora's Mask and Pokemon Stadium.

Many of the backgrounds also feature interactive elements which can be exploited during battle, such as the exploding blocks in Kirby's stage, which prove devastating if you knock an opponent sprawling into them.

PLATFORMS & PUNCHES

One of the biggest changes in this GameCube edition is the single-player Adventure mode, in which players have to battle their way through various side-scrolling worlds, fighting monsters and hopping between perilous platforms. Completing these courses allows you to challenge the level's boss and move on to the next world. Each of the adventure worlds is themed around a different Nintendo game, including F-Zero, The Legend of Zelda and Donkey Kong.

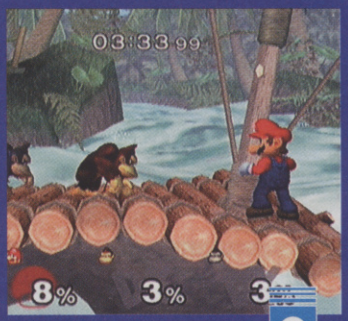


The first level in Adventure mode is set in the Mushroom Kingdom

Half way through the Mushroom Kingdom, you must defeat ten Yoshis

The final fight in the Mushroom Kingdom takes place on the roof of Princess Peach's castle

The final challenge in the Zelda world: defeat Link himself in battle



When the Donkey Kong stage begins, you first have to fight your way past a troop of DK monkeys

Next our hero fights through a Zelda-themed maze, full of zombies

And if you think the game *looks* good, just wait until you *hear* it. Each hero has its own range of voice and sound effects, giving them much more personality than their largely silent N64 counterparts. The soundtrack is cool too, with orchestrated versions of all your favourite Nintendo tunes, from the sweeping drama of Zelda's theme to the bouncy title music from Super Mario 64.

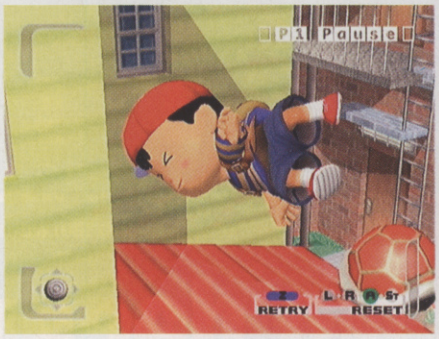
IT'S... TOO... FAST!

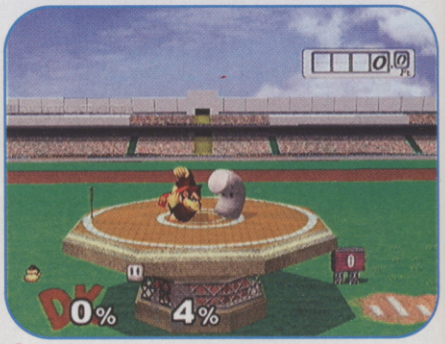
Super Smash Bros Melee is shaping up to be an incredible game, but the fast-paced battles and on-screen pandemonium may prove too much for some. The fighters move like greased lightning and it can be hard to keep an eye on your character, particularly when the camera zooms out a little.

Remaining focused on your warrior is also difficult in the four-player mode, where the whole screen appears to be awash with action. Essentially, Melee makes typical one-on-one fighters such as Tekken Tag Tournament and the Dead Or Alive series look pedestrian.

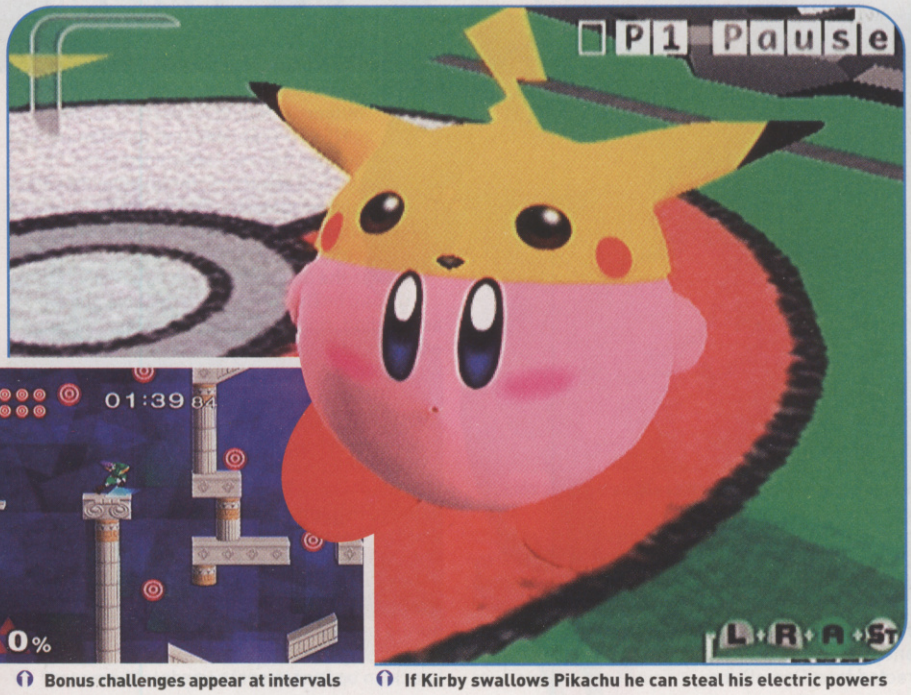
Many of the younger gamers who haven't been weaned on classic beat 'em ups loved the N64 version of Smash Bros, as they were quicker to accept the game's bewildering pace and frenetic fighting style. But with Melee's loving respect for classic Nintendo games and its sophisticated fighting moves, this 'Cube update will appeal to players across the board.

The characters pull great expressions when hit



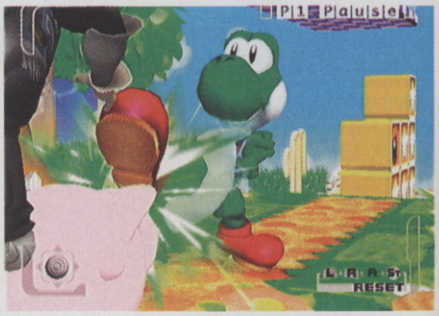


Melee also features loads of mini-games. In Home Run you hit this sack as far as you can



If Kirby swallows Pikachu he can steal his electric powers

Bonus challenges appear at intervals



Yoshi is light and so he can jump the furthest

CVG RECKONS

An incredible achievement and an ideal launch title for Nintendo's new console. The pace may put some off, but Nintendo fans won't be able to get enough of this beautiful bone cruncher. **Dave McC**

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They said it couldn't be done. They insisted he was crazy. But when legendary developer Warren Spector decided he was going to turn the acclaimed PC game Deus Ex into a PlayStation 2 masterpiece, he gave all the nay-sayers a well-deserved two-fingered salute.

So why all the doubters? If you've played the PC version you'll already know that it's the most complex blend of RPG and first-person shooter ever created. It boasts an amazing sci-fi plot that branches off in different directions depending on your choices, and it gives you the freedom to play it any way you want. Well, guess what? The PS2 version is even better.

Like on PC, you play a secret agent in the near future who has been genetically enhanced and is about to uncover the kind of government conspiracy that would give Mulder and Scully the runs.

You can interact with pretty much everything and everyone in the game. Cheap suit, dude

Developer Ion Storm 'ripped the PC interface right out and started from scratch'

"Play a nice guy or a sadistic gimp? Tough call"

Instead of the usual RPG experience, you use nanotechnology to upgrade your abilities

The huge levels take place in seedy Hong Kong backstreets, Parisian catacombs and underwater bases (to name just a few). They recreate a parallel universe in such fine detail that you won't have any trouble believing that you're actually there.

WHATEVER THE HELL YOU WANT

And we weren't joking about the freedom. Whether you want to blow things up, slit throats, hack into computers or use your sniper rifle from a safe distance, Deus Ex lets you do all of it. You can be a nice guy or a sadistic gimp. You can go around talking to people or simply shoot their brains out. And you can do it all in the safe knowledge that it's never looked this good.

Call that a gun? Better use a rocket launcher

DEUS EX

FORMAT: **PS2** OUT: **TBC** DEVELOPER: **ION STORM** PUBLISHER: **EIDOS INTERACTIVE**

You can go around talking to people or shooting their brains out

You can acquire loads of different skills, like strength, stealth and proficiency in different weapon types

As Warren Spector himself explains: "Not only did the team manage to bring over every location, every character, every line of dialogue, every character-development option, every conspiratorial plot twist and every genre-bending play-style choice and problem-solving option, we were able to make some enhancements."

Enhancements like the massively improved graphics and a control system specially designed for the PS2. Sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? Here's hoping it isn't.

CVG RECKONS

This ground-breaking game deserves to reach a massive audience. Here is its chance. Mark H

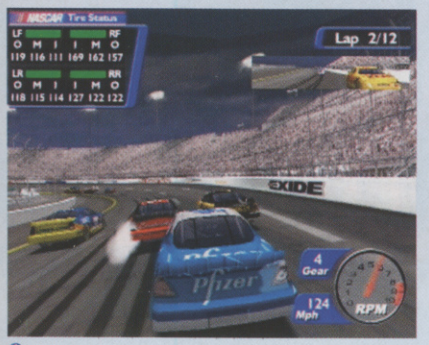
NASCAR HEAT 2002

FORMAT: **PS2** OUT: **MAY** DEVELOPER: **MONSTER GAMES INC.** PUBLISHER: **INFOGRAMES**

As spectator sports go, NASCAR should rank up there with lawn bowls and curling, but the Yanks seem to dig it because it taps into their two favourite things after hamburgers and shotguns – raw power and speed. Plus there's the possibility of a catastrophic high-speed pile-up. It's this kind of high-octane tension that NASCAR Heat 2002 is looking to create on PS2. Lucky us!

A mixture of dragster and stock car action, Heat 2002 sees you tearing up mile-long straits of tarmac at 200mph, as 23 other cars cut you up. If someone bashes into you or you brake too late going into a bend, you'll get mashed by the impact, but the damage model on the cars and the collisions are nowhere near as realistic or detailed as we've seen in games like GTA3 or Project Gotham.

Although it's still early code, the simple race modes such as Championship and Beat the Heat are basic and fail to offer the breadth of options and challenges of GT3 and the like. The tracks are quite dull too, frankly. But it's aiming at fans of simple arcade racers such as Daytona 2001 on DC, so check this out if you've got a need for speed (and little else).

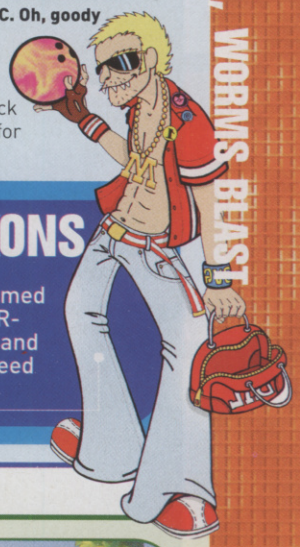


A flurry of cars leave you for dust

The in-car view is nicely detailed, but unfortunately you can see bugger-all

Get involved in some high-speed bump and grind. Well, the Yanks like it

Also on Xbox, PSone and PC. Oh, goody



CVG RECKONS

A game primarily aimed at hardcore NASCAR-style racing freaks, and fans of mindless speed racers. **Mike**

WORMS BLAST

FORMAT: **PS2, PC, PSONE** OUT: **FEBRUARY** DEVELOPER: **TEAM 17** PUBLISHER: **UBI SOFT**

The spineless wonders of yesteryear are back. While the weapons-laden carnage remains much the same as it was, instead of teams of Worms fighting it out head-to-head in a vindictive group deathmatch, you've now got a Bust-A-Move style puzzle game, featuring our wriggly friends plus a few other old-age stars, like Superfrog. Cue fond memories of Amiga, CD32 and PC platform fun.

WORMS HAS TURNED

The basic gameplay requires you to fire the correct-coloured weapon at the correct-coloured bubble – like in Bust-A-Move – and the bigger the bunch of bubbles you burst, the better. You only really get to experience some of the variety on offer when you're firing against an opponent (human or computer) or the clock, or trying to complete one of the challenge modes.

As with all puzzlers in this style, it can be quite addictive and the cartoon look certainly retains the feel of the Worms franchise. But are these strong enough reasons to raise this above the deluge of puzzle games? We'll know soon.

Loop the rockets over the top to get to balloons

"Yes, but it's in an embarrassing place. Who told you?"

Obstacles fall from burst balloons

Get the rocket power wrong and you blow up

CVG RECKONS

Cutsie puzzler that's dead easy to get into but may not stand out enough to threaten Bust-A-Move's position at the top. **Les**

PRISONER OF WAR

FORMAT: **PS2/PC/XBOX** OUT: **JUNE 2002 (XBOX TBC)** DEVELOPER: **WIDE GAMES** PUBLISHER: **CODEMASTERS**

Hide under trucks to get through checkpoints

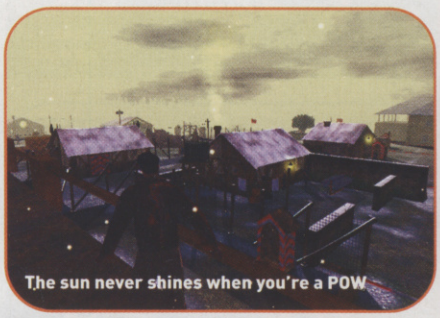
Careful, they can follow your footprints

Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without a selection box, endless turkey sandwiches and a net of saggy-skinned orange fruit. And Boxing Day wouldn't be the bloated hangover it usually is without you scoffing the lot while watching The Great Escape for the umpteenth time.

So when we heard Codemasters was releasing a game inspired by one of the greatest war films ever, it was enough to start us carol singing, despite it being mid-spring.

You'll notice we said 'inspired by' rather than 'based on' there. That's because Codemasters doesn't have the official licence to the film, since it was snapped up by SCI, which seems to be obsessed with '60s movies, having recently released The Italian Job.

This is in fact a good thing for Wide Games, because what you get with Prisoner Of War is two prison camps for the price of one: Stalag Luft III, made famous by Steve McQueen's motorbike antics in The Great Escape, and the most famous prison camp of all, Colditz.



The sun never shines when you're a POW

HANDE HOCH

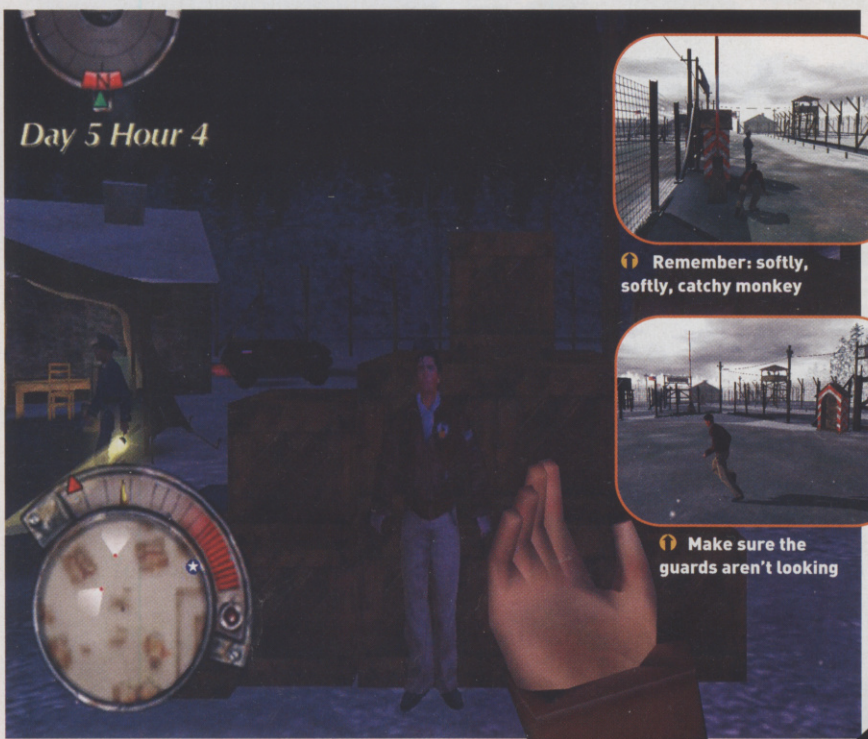
As you'll no doubt have figured out, Prisoner Of War is all about escaping. And if you've ever tried to bunk off work or school, you'll have a good idea of what to expect – patrolling guards, restricted areas, daily routines where you have to assemble in the prisoners' yard, go to breakfast, exercise and sleep.

"Colonel S
Huns, we h

While this may sound a bit dull, the idea is that once you've sussed out where everyone might be at any particular time, you can make sure you're somewhere else while trying to get the the hell out by crawling through a tunnel, hiding in a haytruck or going over the wire.

"We expect players to find ways of doing things that we haven't figured out," says Carl James, lead developer at Wide Games.

"There's an awful lot of freedom for the player to figure out their own way of getting through missions, from using stones to break searchlights or cause distractions, to getting other



The developers are still deciding on whether to include a Metal Gear style radar showing where the guards are

Remember: softly, softly, catchy monkey

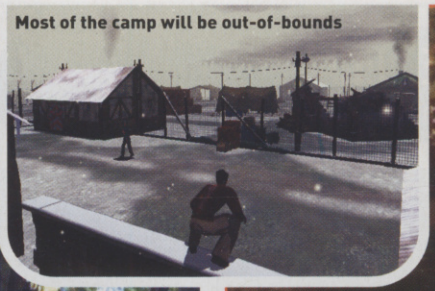
Make sure the guards aren't looking

They're dressed like they're going bowling

CONSOLE YOURSELVES

Despite being shown POW on PC, the interface for the game is designed with a pad in mind. And from the Dual Shock to even the cheapest PC gamepad, it works very well. Moreover, apart from some very clever dynamic music effects, there should be no differences in gameplay between the PC, PS2 or Xbox versions of the game – so everyone will be happy. Except PC gamers, of course, who are never satisfied.

Go to your bunk to save your progress. This will cost you a day in game time

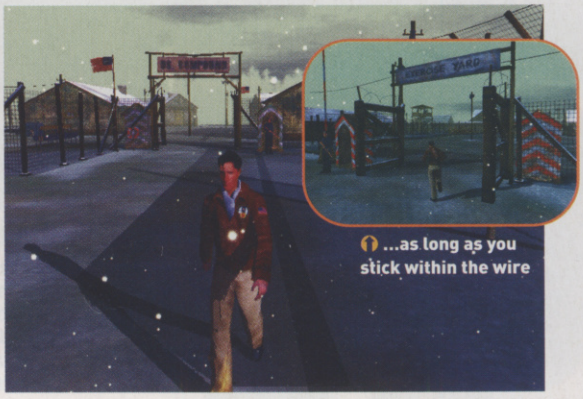


Most of the camp will be out-of-bounds

Fellow POWs will be able to furnish you with certain items

Smythe, we can't kill any e have to think our way out"

The Nazi guards won't bother you...



...as long as you stick within the wire

Looks like you're going to be spending the night in the cooler, my friend

Don't flatter yourself, English pig dog

POWs to help you out, to bribing guards or wearing disguises."

Of course it wouldn't be much of a game if you escaped first time and it was game over, which is why Wide Games has created a rather good story to keep you behind the wire.

"Your job is to infiltrate the camps. The Germans are using them to cover secret weapons development, because they're fairly certain the allies won't bomb their own men – it's a human shield over their work. The player's job is to find out what they're up to, sabotage things as best he can, and then, obviously, escape the camp and move on to his next mission."

MEET THE FIRING SQUAD

The most interesting thing about Prisoner Of War is that you can't kill the guards. Yes, you read that right – you can't. But it does make sense since in those days if you so much as raised a fist you would end up in front of a firing squad. In the game it is a case of outwitting the Germans, using stealth and cunning and always keeping one step ahead. The guards themselves will act on sight and sound, use searchlights at night and even make searches if they suspect you are up to no good.

"There's also a clever system based on the principle of one noise drowning another out," says Carl. "In one of the early missions there's a thunderstorm going on overhead. The player could time his actions to the noise of thunder to drown out any sounds he might make."

With its familiar Tomb Raider-style view, huge areas to explore and hundreds of items to find, trade and use, not to mention clever German guards to outwit, Prisoner Of War is already one of the most original games for years. The fact that Codemasters is at the helm tells us we could be looking at a massive hit.

CVG RECKONS

With hundreds of ways to escape, you may well find yourself staying in if we have another miserable summer. Richie

VAMPIRE NIGHT

FORMAT: **PS2** OUT: **MARCH** DEVELOPER: **WOW ENTERTAINMENT** PUBLISHER: **SONY**

It's a move equivalent to Chris Tarrant and Anne Robinson teaming up to host the mother of all quiz shows. Or Arsenal and Spurs hand-picking the best players from both teams to create a North London dream team. Yes, the impossible has happened – gaming giants and erstwhile rivals Namco and Sega have pooled resources to collaborate on a sharp-shooting gun game. And with the developers of House Of The Dead on the case of this PS2 conversion, it looks like Vampire Night is the spawn of a truly (un)heavenly alliance.

NOSFERATU YOOHOO

Vampire Night sees our gun-toting hero plugging slugs in the hearts of a seemingly endless army of pale-faced bloodsuckers, which is bizarre in itself because, according to Hollywood at least, vampires cannot be killed with guns. But the slog continues, as you're dragged through vampire-infested villages and haunted catacombs on a pre-determined one-way trip to hell.

The action is relentless as you gun down one wave of killer ghouls after the next, firing randomly in the vain hope of bagging the bad guys before they get a hold on you and sink their teeth in.

But if you're smart you'll have checked out the Training mode. Here you'll learn where the vampires' weak spots are, so they hit the deck after just a couple of shots rather than after an entire ammo clip's worth. It also helps to improve accuracy, so when you're confronted by a villager whose neck is being chewed off by a demon, you'll hopefully plug the vamp rather than the poor sap who's being sucked dry.

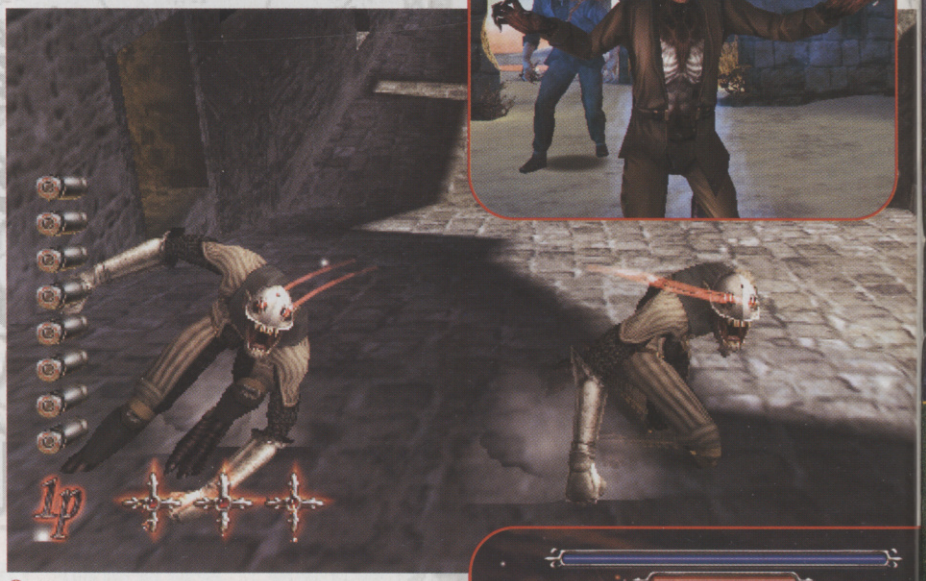
CROSS-FIRE

So what is Vampire Night offering over current gun lord Time Crisis 2? Well, better special effects for starters, with vampire corpses crumbling into dust rather than just disappearing. The animation is class too, giving the vamps a distinct, inhuman feel.

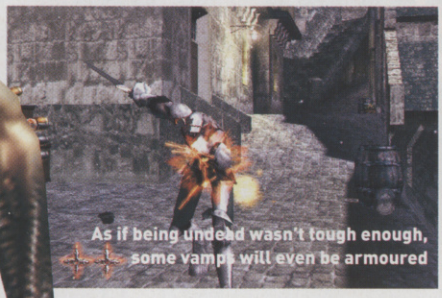
And because these are some of the best-looking levels in any gun game we've seen, from cemeteries to a medieval village, there's plenty of eye candy to keep you firing away until you've had your cruci-fix of blasting action.

Vampires shouldn't have pointy ears

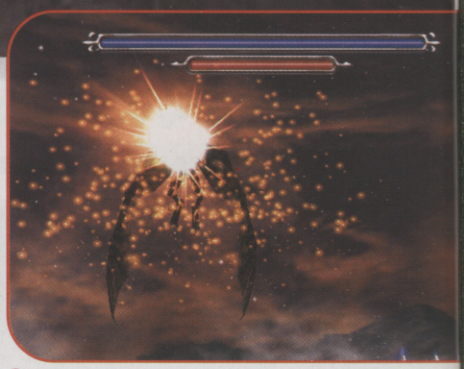
It can't be easy for a manbat to find a suit that fits as well as that. Must have been to Saville Row



Two-on-one isn't fair, but with eight rounds in the chamber the odds are in your favour



As if being undead wasn't tough enough, some vamps will even be armoured



Boss battles are easier in two-player mode – until one of you dies. Then you're in trouble

He won't look so tough when you bring down more concrete on his head

He looks like a Final Fantasy reject, but his teeth are as sharp as his sword

He may have made us jump, but his weak spot is exposed. Blast it

CVG RECKONS

Shaping up to be a lightgun game you can really sink your teeth into. Plus added bite for those of us who prefer battling the undead to mere mortal villains. Les

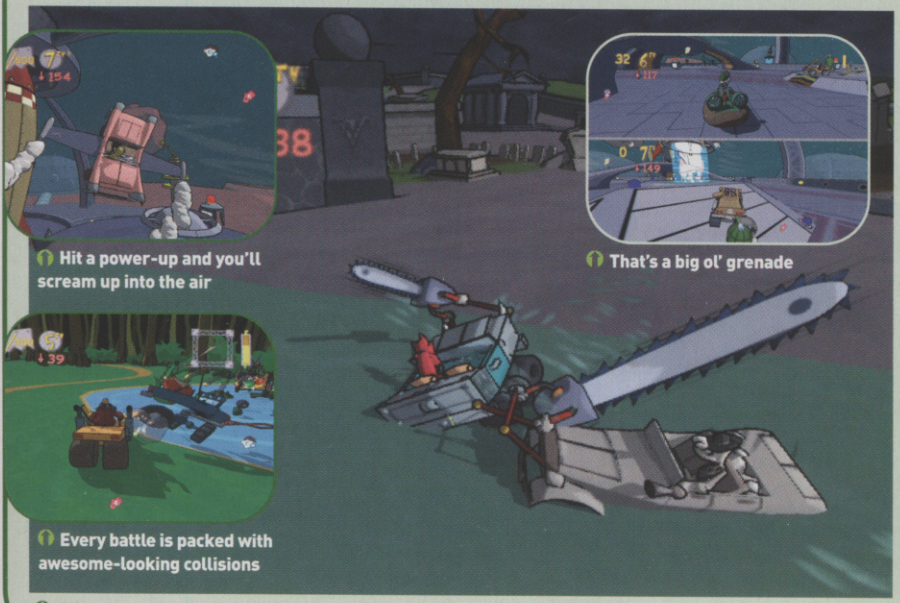
CEL DAMAGE

FORMAT: **XBOX** OUT: **MARCH 14** DEVELOPER: **EA** PUBLISHER: **EA**

Being chased by a murderous chainsaw-wielding devil sat in an armour-plated jeep might seem a little disturbing. But in this 'wacky' misfit-filled world of cel-shaded cartoon madness, the nutty demolition derby action actually looks cuter and feels cheerier than an episode of The Smurfs.

CUTESY CAR COMBAT

Where Twisted Metal Black went for a hardcore apocalyptic atmosphere, Cel Damage brings sweetness to the tough genre of multiplayer vehicular combat. It's got cool cartoon-realistic visuals, bouncy handling, enormous weapons, and explosive animation. Giant axes cutting cars in half, vehicles turning into planes and ray-guns miniaturising opponents – it's got the lot. But the gameplay isn't anything new. Modes include deathmatch, capture-the-flag and battle races. Nonetheless, the crazy pace, kookily themed arenas and funky comedy weapons should be enough to make Cel Damage appeal to anyone who's into car-smashing mayhem.



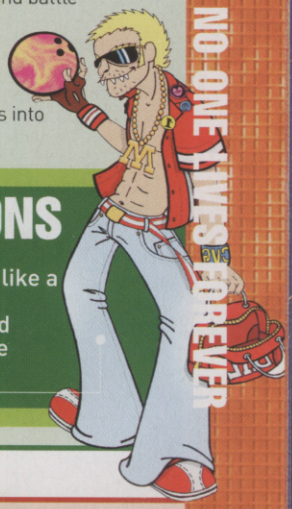
Hit a power-up and you'll scream up into the air

That's a big ol' grenade

Every battle is packed with awesome-looking collisions

Slice the hell out of the opposition with chainsaws the size of surfboards

'Feel the weight of my chopper, yee-ha ha ha!'



CVG RECKONS

Fast, funny and looks like a real cartoon. But car combat fans won't find much originality in the gameplay. **Mike**

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER

FORMAT: **PS2** OUT: **FEBRUARY** DEVELOPER: **MONOLITH** PUBLISHER: **VIVENDI**

How do you make a Bond game better? Tricky question? Actually, it's quite simple: you just kick out James and replace him with a foxy agent chick in a tight orange catsuit. Her lipstick doubles as a grenade. Her perfume bottle sprays sleeping gas. And it's all set in the swinging '60s, Austin Powers-style.

IS IT GROOVY BABY?

Like the PC original, the gameplay combines a mixture of exploration, killing and must-win set pieces. Early on, you're sniping assassins on the balcony of a hotel while a deaf ambassador blunders around, oblivious. And if the assassins get in gear and do their job, it's game over for you.

Another cool section has you tumbling out of an aeroplane with no parachute, shooting enemies in the sky and trying to latch onto a guy with a 'chute. The corridor shooting is somewhat less inspired with predictable AI patterns, but there are plenty of sight and vocal gags to keep you interested.

Insulting someone's fez was a capital crime at the Tommy Cooper look-alike club

How the hell are you going to get in there? Shake that ass, girlie

Let's hope that's the barrel exploding in his face

Don't kill the innocents in the hotel shootout

CVG RECKONS

No One Lives Forever is looking alright, but Half-Life has already set a high standard for PC shooter ports. **Dean**

This eye-melting heat effect shows off the cool graphical capabilities of Xbox. Thankfully there's loads of destruction in this baby, too

A Yakuza bad guy leans out of the car window, brandishing a big gun. But unfortunately there's no gun fighting action in Wreckless. Ah well

WRECKLESS

FORMAT: **XBOX** OUT: **MARCH 14** DEVELOPER: **BUNKASHA** PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**

The melting sun seeps behind the vibrant and bustling streets of Hong Kong, a thick heat haze rising from the hot tarmac below. But this pretty city is rotten to the core with the scourge of organised crime. And there's only one way to clean it up – drive like a loon.

Select one of the ridiculous vehicles, such as a 'discreet' monster truck or a dune buggy with a Union Jack on the bonnet, and tear around the claustrophobic metropolis like a wrecking ball on wheels. Explosive car chases, nutty vehicles, and an insanely astonishing and original visual style? All in a day's policing, Captain.

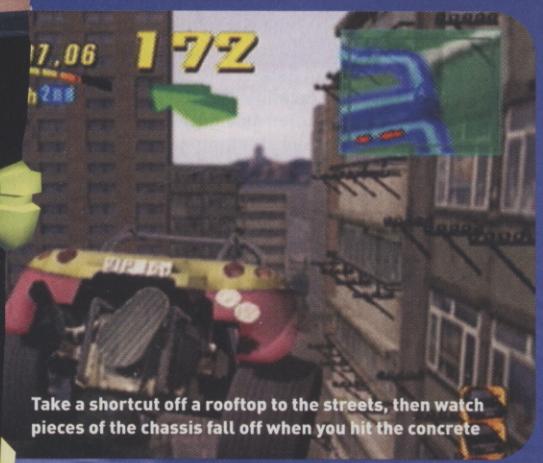
If you've played GTAIII you'll be frustrated that you can't bounce pedestrians off your bonnet

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

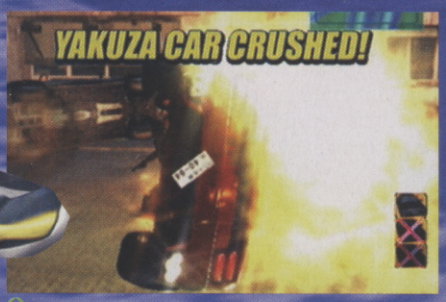
The first mission sees you hunting down a convoy of Yakuza cars, hot on the tail of an armoured security truck. Your objective is to smash mindlessly into each car and destroy them all within a tight time limit, draining their energy bars until they explode in massive balls of flames. However, unlike the original and clever missions of GTAIII, the 20 main missions in Wreckless are more in a simple 'pick-up-and-put-down' arcade vein. They include challenges such as belting around town and obliterating illegal fast food stalls in a head-to-head race against an AI car, and the one-dimensional task of rescuing a kidnapped feng-shui professor (just one question: why bother?).

But, credit where it's due, Wreckless isn't pitching itself as an intelligent, long-haul slog. It's far more interested in wooing you with fast-paced destruction on a monumental scale, blindingly detailed deformable vehicles, and its trouser-arousing look.

Picture this: you plough through and shatter a line of bamboo scaffolding, blast the thick pillars of a Chinese temple and demolish a street market. Properly warmed up, you then push over a tram and finally have a head-on, high-impact collision with a cement truck,



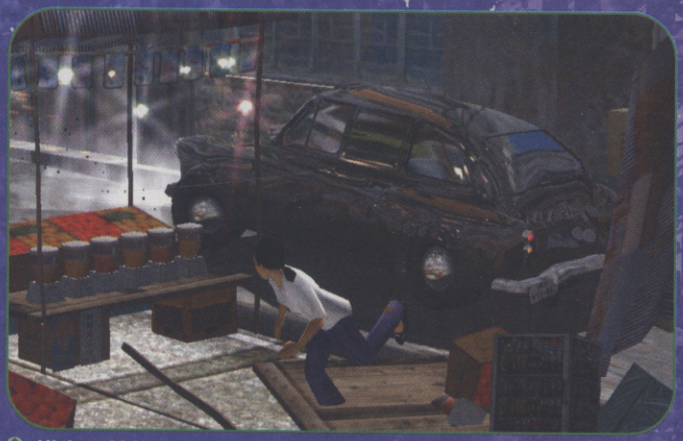
Take a shortcut off a rooftop to the streets, then watch pieces of the chassis fall off when you hit the concrete



Boom! Drain the Yakusa cars' energy bars 'til they explode in a blinding ball of fire

The amazing lighting effects are some of the best you'll have ever witnessed on a console

The replay modes are stunning, with loads of angles available, but what's really amazing is the fact that the in-game action looks just as good

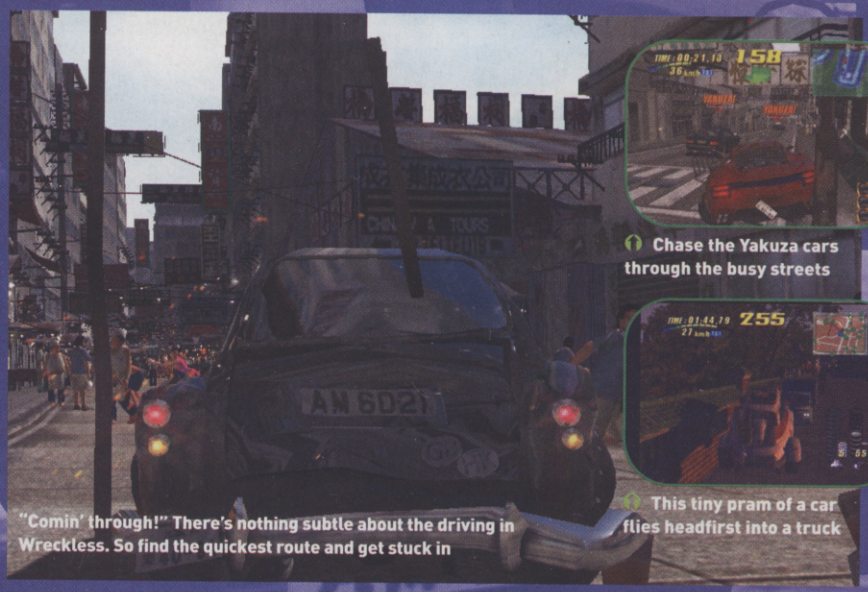


All the vehicles look fantastic. This super-polished taxi is a perfect example of how the city backgrounds are stunningly reflected in the bodywork of the cars

"You'll make Hong Kong look like King Kong's paid a visit"

TOOLS OF DESTRUCTION

There's a cool line-up of quirky vehicles available for wrecking duties. Do you like mad or madder?



"Comin' through!" There's nothing subtle about the driving in Wreckless. So find the quickest route and get stuck in

Chase the Yakuza cars through the busy streets

This tiny pram of a car flies headfirst into a truck

knocking the revolving barrel clean off! All in a few of minutes. It makes the crashes and car-crumpling action of PS2's Burnout look mild.

You can't help but be bowled over by the stunning amount of chaotic carnage. Not to mention the amazing lighting, reflections and tiny graphical gems that make your eyes spasm with joy. Like the way sunlight shimmers off patches of hot tarmac and how passing pieces of scenery are reflected in the bodywork of the sleek vehicles.

ONE-ON-ONE A NO-NO

But before everyone spontaneously combusts into over-excited heaps of man-ash, some notes of caution. Wreckless's biggest potential flat tyre is its lack of multiplayer option. Also, players used to powersliding around corners may feel frustrated by the 'go where you point' handling. However, the game isn't finished and we've been assured this will be improved.

Then there's the pedestrian roadkill. In GTAIII, as you'd expect in a city called Liberty, you're free to mow 'em down. Not so here.

It's rare for a game to leap out from nowhere, grab you by the chuddies and command your attention, and Wreckless has managed this despite our reservations. We've only had a limited number of missions to toy with so far, but we've given them a thorough thrashing and are impressed with the cinematic visuals and blistering action.

However, we hope the finished game will make missions longer and less simple, and offer a bigger challenge for the seasoned racing game fan. We'll keep you posted.

CVG RECKONS

Next-gen visuals to die for and crazy city-smashing arcade racing action. Think Burnout meets MSR, with a pinch of GTAIII. **Mike**

"Ten warriors brandishing huge swords – banzai!"

Deadly crossbows to your left and sharpened swords to the right, moving so fast and in such a frenzy that all you can see is the blur of steel and skin against traditional Chinese battle costumes.

Are they with you or against you? The sparks from the clash of steel on steel and the confusion of coloured robes and battle gear makes it impossible to tell. You steam in, sword in hand, and hope for maximum enemy casualties. This is feudal war. And it turns out you can't damage your allies anyway. Banzai!

SLICE AND DICE

Dynasty Warriors 3 has slashed its way right through the middle of the CVG office belly.

Luckily, sparkly effects and big explosions make up for the lack of blood

Each type of foe has his own health bar and fighting strengths to figure out

DYNASTY WARRIORS 3

FORMAT: **PS2** OUT: **TBC** DEVELOPER: **KOEI** PUBLISHER: **THQ**

Sitting in a pool of entrails on one side is the majority who reckon that the game is a shallow rehash of a title that wasn't that hot in the first place.

Splashing around next to a ruptured spleen on the other are a few of us who love the non-stop button bashing and manic carnage of all-out arcade-influenced war. Though it's billed as a 'tactical action' title, the greatest strategic challenge here is whether you can scratch your nuts while slashing foes in half on-screen.

It's a bit of a shame that there's currently no auto-face or lock-on button

You can usually rack up over 100 kills per mission

Each of the sprawling levels takes the form of an historical battle and you have to lead your band of warriors in huge scenes of mass hand-to-hand combat. Though victory conditions vary from mission to mission, there'll be grand scale destruction of your rival's forces every time.

It's unquestionably brainless. But if you like the idea of playing war games but don't have the patience for tweaking stats and planning tactical manoeuvres, then DW3's frantic enemy-shredding could satisfy your blood lust.

The sparks fly and so do bodies

Each warrior has his or her own special Musuo attacks

CVG RECKONS

Repetitive and simple, but can be surprisingly satisfying and fun to play. But as always, one man's piping-hot cup of tea is another man's tepid jug of wee. **Lee**

KESSEN II

FORMAT: **PS2** OUT: **MARCH** DEVELOPER: **KOEI** PUBLISHER: **THQ**

The original Kessen was a launch game for the PlayStation 2 in Japan and the UK, but that's about all it had going for it. Amazing-looking cutscenes tried to cover up some gaping holes in the gameplay, such as having little control over hugely confusing battle sequences.

If you will eat all the pies you'll get the bad jobs

Look at DW3 opposite. See any similarities?

Unfortunately, the sequel won't be able to rely on being one of just a few launch titles to bolster sales, especially as a quality strategy game, Age Of Empires II, has already shown what's possible on PS2.

KISSING KESSENS

War games tend to live or die on two factors: how great the battle scenes look, and how easy it is to get to grips with things in the heat of a fight. Kessen II at least gets one of these right. Titanic battles between huge armies are presented in amazing detail, up close and personal to the action.

Controlling these battles, however, proves to be something of a nightmare and the dozens of cutscenes that break up one fight don't help to hold on to the focus. Is it better than the first? Yes. Are we looking forward to it with baited breath? Hell no.

Magicians can cast spells during a battle to wipe out huge numbers of troops – on both sides

Give orders or control your commander directly

CVG RECKONS

Feudal Chinese war games fill a niche at the best of times. This may well only be of interest to *very* hardcore strategy fans. **Les**

SALT LAKE 2002

FORMAT: **PS2, PC** OUT: **FEBRUARY** DEVELOPER: **ATTENTION TO DETAIL** PUBLISHER: **EIDOS**

The four-yearly gathering of people with a lycra fetish (aka the Winter Olympics) is in Salt Lake City this Spring. And, almost as predictably as British cities bidding and failing to host international sports events, there's a game based on it. And, more predictably still, early indications are that the lush snow of Salt Lake may be tinged slightly yellow.

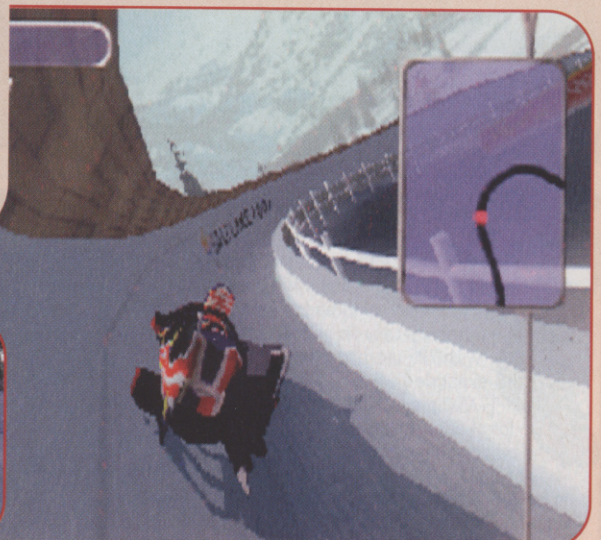
SIX OF THE BEST?

It does boast environments modelled using satellite imaging and spot-on character physics. But you're moving so fast you hardly notice and it can't hide the fact that, unlike the real event, there's a miserly six sim-style events to compete in, either solo or in four-player. Stunt skiing and snowboarding are looking the best, requiring more skill and offering trick-oriented gameplay. But the other events either don't offer the same kind of thrills or – like the bobsleigh – are so unforgiving they don't feel like great fun either. Brr!

Doh! Where are the brakes on these things

Not as deep as Shaun Palmer's

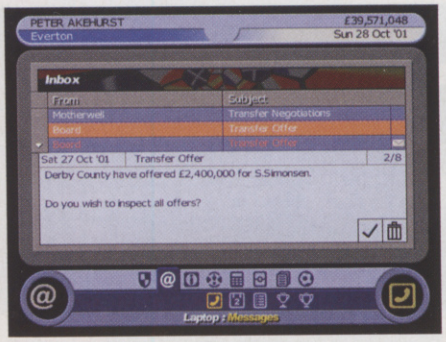
Colours don't contrast enough



Bobsleigh. Hurtling down an ice tube in an oversized shopping trolley

CVG RECKONS

Limited by its six events but is spot on technically. Doesn't make the gameplay good, though. Could be on course for a chilly reception. **Les**



If one of your players starts giving you grief, just get rid of the ungrateful bugger

You can adjust tactics mid-game if needs be

With such a huge database of players, you can search for your next star by any criteria you like

"A tabloid birds and booze scandal... again?"

LMA MANAGER 2002

FORMAT: **PS2** OUT: **APRIL** DEVELOPER: **CODEMASTERS** PUBLISHER: **CODEMASTERS**

How often have you laughed at a footie manager's misfortunes? Laugh no more, 'cos it's time to put your money where your mouth is, as one of the most comprehensive football management sims is signing up for PS2 action.

PLAYER POWER

The difference between you being an Arsene Wenger or a Peter Taylor isn't just in your judgement on the field. Now players have individual behaviour patterns and personalities – allegedly based on real life – so your off-field management counts here too.

Some players like the odd drink or two and may end up in the tabloids. Foreign players may get homesick and not want to play any more. Drop someone for a match and they may sulk and demand a transfer. And you have to decide how to discipline them with the likes of fines, suspensions and transfers.

If all these attributes are supposedly based on the real players, it sounds like the designers had better watch out in case the odd law suit gets fired their way. What it does do though, is bring the players to life. Instead of just names and numbers they've got personalities. And with 722 teams to manage, as well as expanded squads, and more than 17,000 players in the database, that's a lot of personality. It's just one of several new or enhanced elements Codemasters has brought with it from the PSone version (8/10 in Issue 242), including constantly updated match detail to check player performance mid-game.

And with its TV-style presentation, a powerful graphics engine and a look that isn't as intimidating as PC-style stat-based footie management games, LMA should appeal to hardcore stat freaks and casual managers alike.

Everton switch to all-out attack. Judging by their current form it won't make a lot of difference

Delving into the transfer market can provide a quick fix for your scoring problems

No, it's not a Subbuteo sub-game, this is where you sort out all of your tactical master-strokes

CVG RECKONS

Deep, involving and surprisingly nice to look at. This could be the fan's favourite on PS2. Les

"The changes are good but controversy is inevitable"

Shadow Man 2 is about as different as it could be from the first game, without being a cartoon kart racer set in the afterlife or a Tetris-style puzzle game where you have to arrange dismembered limbs in lines to earn mega-points (fine ideas though they are).

So fans of the original game had better prepare themselves: Shadow Man 2econd Coming sees a totally reworked and redesigned game concept, and a vastly enhanced game environment to explore. And while 2econd Coming is great to play, this dark and brooding adventure is guaranteed to upset fans who simply want more of the same dark platform action they loved in the original.

This giant green dude wants to rip you a new ass

It's a man tacked to the ceiling by his chest. Nice

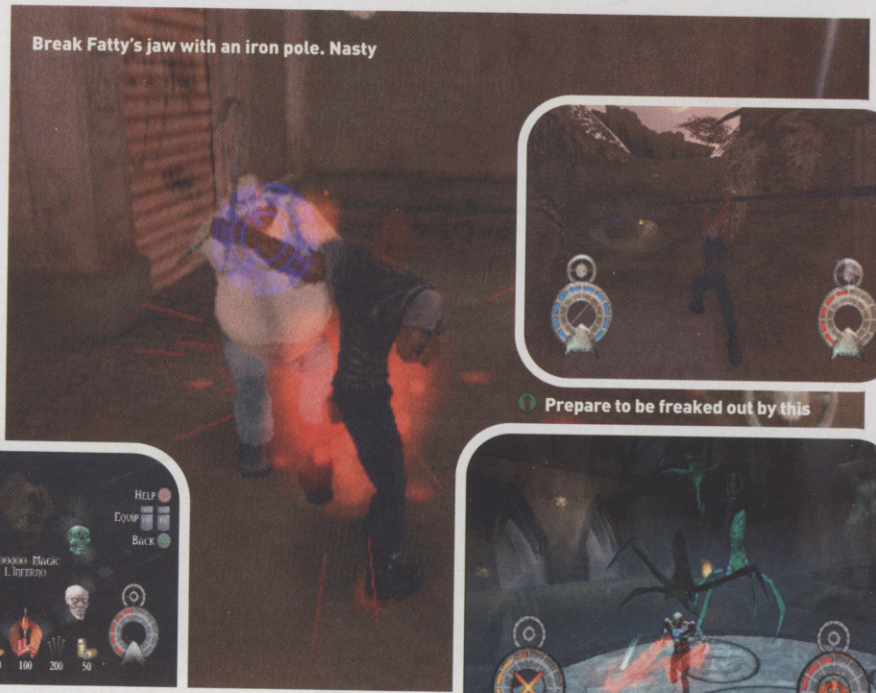
SHADOW MAN 2ECOND COMING

FORMAT: **PS2** OUT: **FEBRUARY** DEVELOPER: **ACCLAIM** PUBLISHER: **ACCLAIM**

Like any superhero, the main guy here has two identities, one for each realm of the game. During the day you hang out in Liveside, which is essentially just your ordinary small town. You play a burly black guy called Mike, who has a passion for poetry and pump-action shotguns. But in Deadside, a domain infested by zombies and demons, you're Shadow Man, all stringy bits of flesh and voodoo magic.

WHEN NIGHT FALLS...

Unlike the first game, you automatically switch to Shadow Man as the in-game clock ticks past and night falls. This is one of the biggest gameplay differences, and you'll have to use each alter-ego's unique skills to solve puzzles. Luckily each level is split into mini-quests, to make the game easier to digest.



Break Fatty's jaw with an iron pole. Nasty

Prepare to be freaked out by this

Fiery voodoo power in Deadside

Check out the amount of extras and health you've totted up

Enemies are now more detailed and surreal

As he gets through missions, Shadow Man's evil foes explode in satisfying explosions of gibs

CHANGE IS GOOD

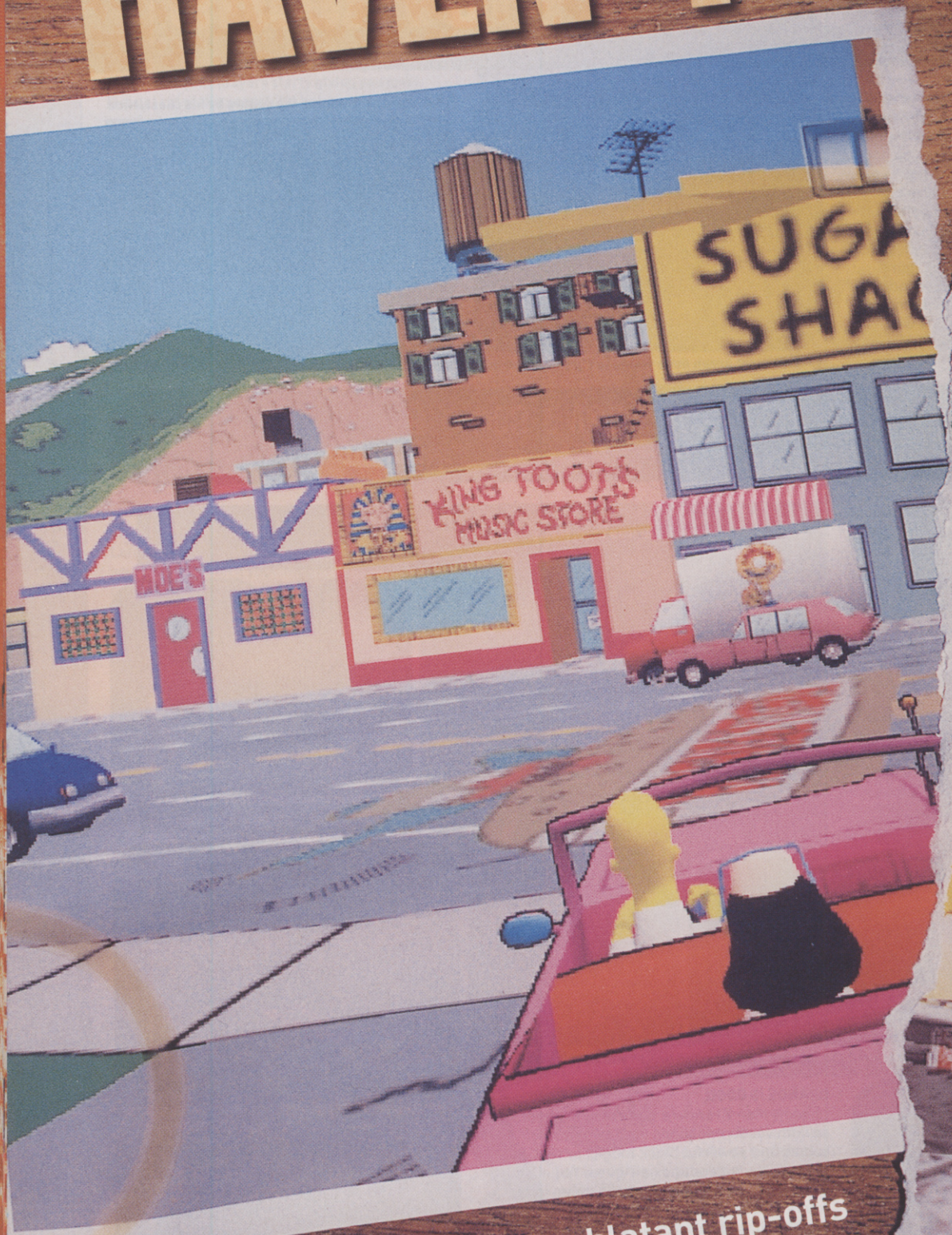
Shadow Man 2 is now a gun-freak's dream. Tool up with voodoo weapons stripping flesh off bodies and powerful black magic, or real-life grenade launchers and nail-guns. You also get a tool-box to store useful puzzle items in. You're able to select two weapons or items for each hand, and switch between them quickly without having to access the inventory.

The game benefits from a major graphical overhaul, and the action is now more evenly split between Deadside and Liveside. If you're new to this Voodoo then you won't know any different, but these are big changes for the Shadow Man veteran to cope with. Either way, this is magic, albeit black magic.

CVG RECKONS

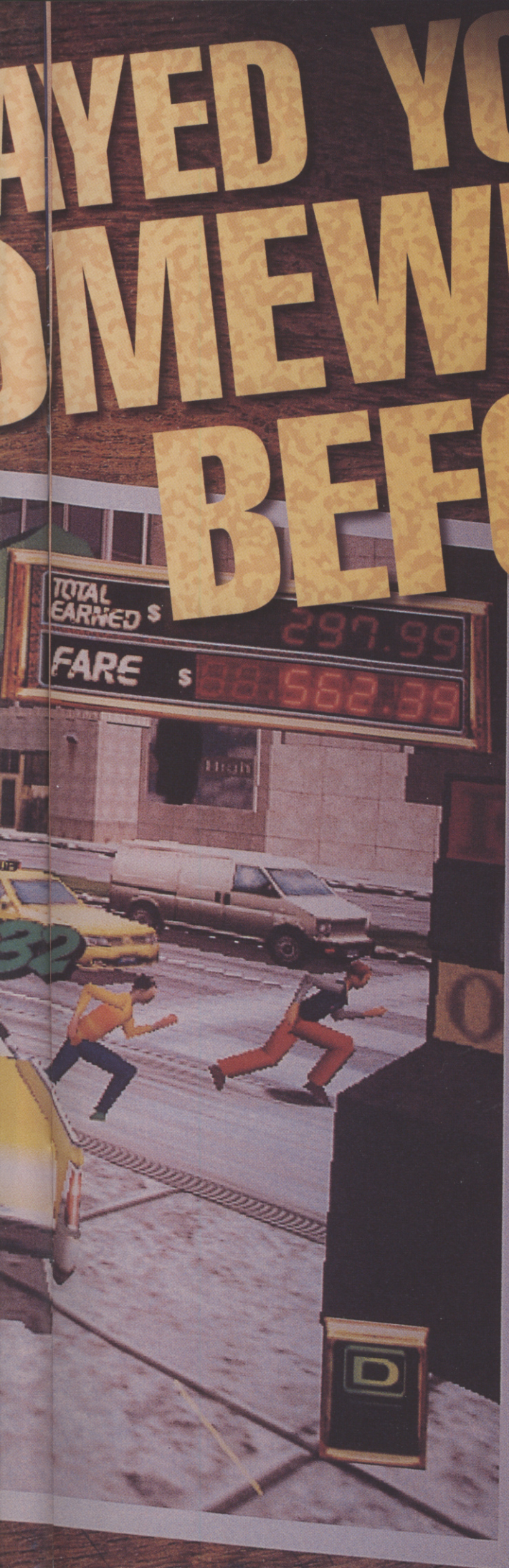
A complete reworking of the Shadow Man experience, however great to play, won't pass without debate. But the changes we've seen are all for the good. Lee

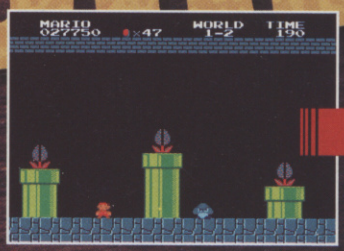
'HAVEN'T I PLA SO

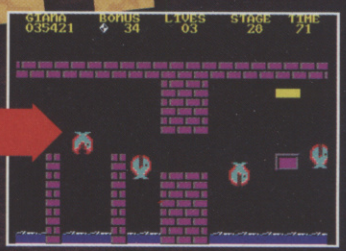


From mimicry and homage to blatant rip-offs – has gaming run out of ideas?

AYED YOU OMEWHERE BEFORE?"







In Super Mario Bros, our hero had to leap between monsters which appeared at intervals across the screen...

...and exactly the same idea was used in The Great Giana Sisters. Except that the killer fish were rubbish

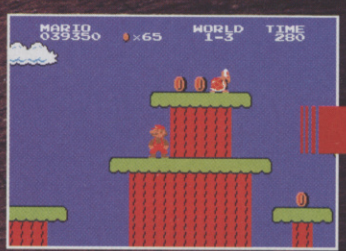
Everywhere you look, ideas are being shamelessly ripped off. When teen pop temptress Britney shook her booty on to the music scene, teen pop temptress Christina wasn't far behind. When meteorite disaster flick Deep Impact hit cinemas, meteorite disaster flick Armageddon landed hot on its heels. Even the cacking telly's at it, with ITV's duff docusoap Holiday Airline, which was hard to tell apart from the Beeb's Airport. Or, in terms of how entertaining it was, from picking your arse.

Yes, from Coca-Cola to Sony's Walkman, having your idea 'borrowed' has a long and guilty tradition. Just look how Mr Wheel ripped off that hairy cave geezer's top idea for revolutionising transport... And if you're into your videogames, you've probably seen more identical ideas and copycat concepts than most. You see, totally original games – like finding consoles that don't have a version of Rayman – are hard to find.

Inevitably, other developers' own ideas may be influenced by the best bits of such rare releases. But it's the shameless didn't-even-try-to-hide-it ripped-off game ideas that raise a collective groan every time they're regurgitated into our laps like so much reconstituted ham. And again, much like Granny's strange wee-scented sandwiches, they usually leave a slightly sour taste in the mouth.

RIP-OFFS THROUGH THE AGES

Videogame rip-offs have been around since day one. After the success of Taito's Space Invaders in 1978, it wasn't long before arcades were swamped with alien attack copies such as Galaxians, most developers happy just to add a few twists to a popular genre rather than trying to think of anything especially new. And then when somebody did – thank you Nintendo and Donkey Kong – ideas-starved companies switched to pumping out platformers instead.



The Brothers' adventure was staged in colourful cartoon worlds with wicked monsters and eye-sizzling colour...

...the Sisters' adventure was staged in colourful cartoon worlds with wicked monsters and eye-sizzling colour

Indiana Jones inspired Tomb Raider, which itself inspired a thousand imitators

One of the earlier code copycats in the UK was The Great Giana Sisters, which appeared on the Amiga and Commodore 64 in 1988. This colourful platform romp featured two playable characters, secret warps and hidden treasures, and bore more than a passing resemblance to a certain Nintendo game with two Italian-sounding brothers as heroes...

Unsurprisingly, Nintendo made sure this brazen Super Mario Bros. rip-off was withdawn in a matter of weeks. Aside from the games looking and playing exactly alike – some of the maps were almost pixel-perfect copies – the publishers didn't help their defence by saying in adverts for the game: "Move over Brothers, the Sisters are here!" Oh dear.

Videogames have an uncanny knack for soaking up inspiration from other media. Done well, this can produce some unforgettable moments: the Indiana Jones boulder chase scene mimicked by Tomb Raider, Crash Bandicoot and others; the Lylat Wars mothership level which *is* the final battle from Independence Day; and the whole Res Evil series, which owes its shambling zombies to George A. Romero's Living Dead movies.

Nor is there anything to say that developers shouldn't take inspiration from other games. After all, without the success of Mario Bros. games, it's unlikely that we'd have had the chance to sample Sonic The Hedgehog, which took its lead from Nintendo but added Sega's unique brand of gameplay. But the game comparisons opposite show how many developers go way beyond occasionally expanding on a rival's idea.

As some genres are more popular than others, it's understandable that developers churn out endless racing and fighting games, since they're more likely to make a tidy profit. And when the same genres are being plundered time and time again, it's inevitable that most new games will remind you of something you've played before. But in fact it could well be gamers ourselves that are making the whole sorry situation worse. How often have you heard someone say, "It's good, but not as good as..."?

It seems many players are always on the look-out for games that offer a similar (enjoyable) playing experience to what has come before, just with a graphical lift – positively encouraging developers still further to imitate or make blatant rip-offs. Which might go some way to explaining why, when genuinely fresh or original titles such as PaRappa The Rapper, Ecco The Dolphin or Vib-Ribbon come along, few gamers are actually interested, and publishers shy away from taking risks in the future. So, perhaps we're simply getting the games we deserve.

Lines of alien invaders scrolled mercilessly down the screen in the original Space Invaders...

...an idea which was 'borrowed' wholesale by Namco for their Galaxians arcade game

The motherships from Independence Day close in on planet Earth. What a great idea for a videogame...

In Lylat Wars, a mothership closes in for the kill. Haven't we seen that somewhere before?

CRAZY TAXI VS THE SIMPSONS ROAD RAGE

If you're looking for a good example of rip-off gaming, The Simpsons Road Rage is certainly the most shameless.

The game involves picking up passengers on the streets and taking them to their destination in the quickest time possible, driving over anything and everything that gets in your way. Yup, you've guessed it. Road Rage is a barefaced copy of Sega's arcade speed-fest, Crazy Taxi.

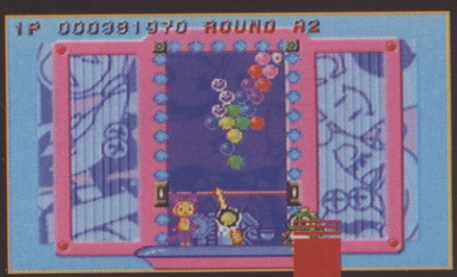
Road Rage doesn't just pinch the game concept, though. It also looks like Crazy Taxi, with coloured rings surrounding waiting passengers and stylish environments which rocket past as you drive from A to B.

Road Rage has the advantage of having the best television licence around but, for our money, the city in Sega's game is much more fun to race around than Springfield and Crazy Taxi's sensation of speed is more convincing and, well, scary.

In Crazy Taxi, you can spot a paying customers a mile off as they're surrounded by a coloured ring...

...as are the passengers in Road Rage! The Simpsons game looks and plays exactly like Sega's taxi classic

BUST-A-MOVE VS SNOOD



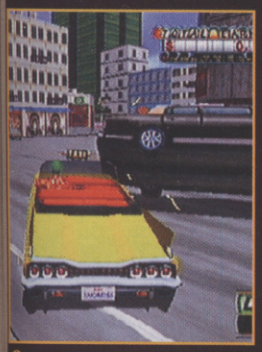
The idea in Bust-A-Move is to connect coloured balls and make them disappear from your screen...

...while the concept in Snood is to connect coloured freaks and make them disappear

Even puzzle titles aren't safe from the threat of gameplay copycats. In fact, it's no exaggeration to say that most puzzle videogames are a direct descendent of Tetris. But if you want to see a game which makes no attempt to hide its roots, look no further than Snood.

Snood began life as a PC shareware puzzler which quickly spread across the Internet, offering simple controls, addictive gameplay and cute characters. The action involves connecting three sprites of the same colour which are fired from a cannon, an action which makes them disappear. In other words, it's a direct rip-off of Bust-A-Move.

The only real difference is that Bust-A-Move sees you firing coloured balls, while creatures called Snoods are shot in the shareware title. Snood is now available on the GBA, so you can enjoy rip-off gaming wherever you like.



The madcap action in Crazy Taxi sees you speeding through the centre of town, often failing to avoid the oncoming traffic...

...which is exactly the same as Simpsons Road Rage, except that the action's based in Springfield

MARIO KART VS KONAMI KRAZY RACERS

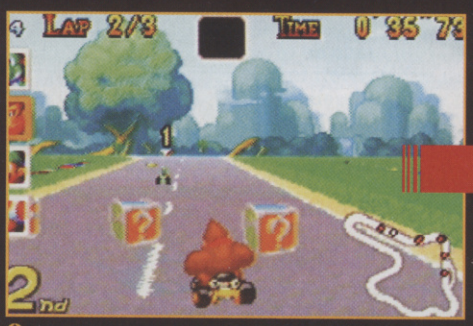
When the Game Boy Advance finally arrived, most gamers were disappointed that Mario Kart Super Circuit wasn't available at launch. However, one cheeky game was at the starting grid to fill the comedy racing void.

Konami Krazy Racers was very similar to Nintendo's kart classic, with characters from famous games such as Mystical Ninja and Grey Fox from Metal Gear Solid racing around cartoon worlds, collecting weapons on the track to knock seven bells out of each other.

As far as rip-offs go, Konami Krazy Racers is pretty good. The action's fast, the tracks are well designed and the extra mini-games add variety to the traditional kart action. However, this doesn't hide the fact that KKR bears more than a passing resemblance to Mario Kart, but doesn't quite have the charm of Nintendo's genre-defining title.

Staying ahead of the pack in Mario Kart requires you to collect and unleash powerful boosts

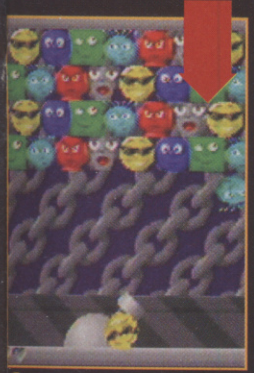
And, guess what... you have to do exactly the same thing to win in Konami Krazy Racers!



As always, the power-ups in Mario Kart are strewn across the tracks for racers to collect...

...an idea which also appears in Konami Krazy Racing. Except that you collect bells, not boxes

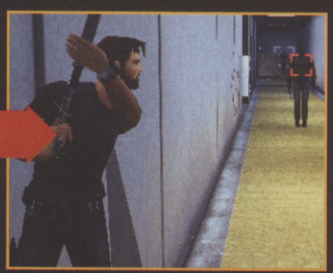
Most games are careful to hide the sources where they take their inspiration from...



...while Snood is happy to flaunt the fact that it's been copied from a puzzle classic

METAL GEAR SOLID VS HEADHUNTER

Snake shelters from enemy fire by pressing himself against a wall, waiting for the right moment to pounce...



...a stealthy, sneaky move which has been 'borrowed' by the game Headhunter

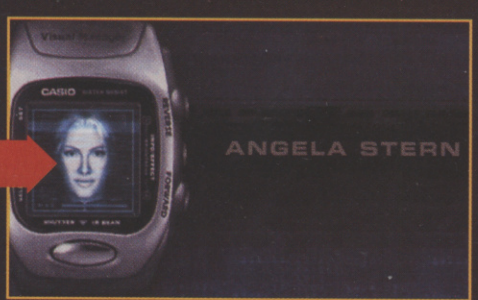
The poor old Dreamcast may be on its last legs, but there's still time to squeeze out one more imitation adventure.

Although the story in Headhunter is vastly different to Metal Gear Solid's – it's some gubbins about the near future where the government controls everything, and your role is as law enforcer – the gameplay is shockingly similar.

Stealth is the name of the game in Headhunter. You must steer your hero through realistic environments, avoiding enemy contact. Even the action where the game's hero looks around the corner of a wall to spy on his enemies is exactly like one of Snake's trademark moves. The game also features heavy exchanges of dialogue, similar to Snake's conversations via his Codec.

But at least Headhunter takes inspiration from an established product and adds its own unique twists, unlike titles such as Snood, which are almost identical to their successful counterparts.

As he explores, Snake can use his Codec to stay in touch with the folks back home



Headhunter also features lots of movie-style dialogue and a watch which mimics Snake's Codec

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YOUR SHOUT

Got something to say about games we've reviewed? Totally concur or violently disagree? Then feed us your spleen in 100 words or less. Include a score out of ten, your details and maybe a picture of yourself (mainly to give us a cheap laugh, though we might print it too). Snail-mail or email us at the address above, marked Your Shout.

GRAND THEFT AUTO III
Format: PS2
Reviewed: Issue 241
Score: 9/10

WHAT WE SAID:
"Crazy Taxi meets Driver meets Syphon Filter in a dark alley. Brilliantly brutal."

YOU RECKON:
"The scope of freedom in this game is immense. Where else can you pick up a prostitute, do a drive-by and drive an ambulance in the same day? Best game on PS2. 9/10" **James Border, Watford**

"If there's one game to get on PS2 this is it. The look is stunning and the gameplay is excellent. You're put straight into the action and there's so much to do. I've completed it once and now I'm going back for the things I missed. 10/10"
Tom Web, Portsmouth

ALIENS VS PREDATOR 2
Format: PC
Reviewed: Issue 241
Score: 9/10

WHAT WE SAID:
"This is quite possibly the finest first-person shooter ever."

YOU RECKON:
"Other than a few nice new touches, there's nothing really groundbreaking about this follow-up. The scares only come when you're playing as a marine. 7/10" **Peter Kennedy, Northampton**

"The tension of the multiplayer game is unlike anything else on PC. AVP2 is brilliant in every way. 10/10" **Carl Dickinson, Fulham**

CHART ATTACK!

CVG
What's turning us on

1	Metal Gear Solid 2 (PS2)
2	Tony Hawk's 3 (PS2)
3	Halo (Xbox)
4	Jet Set Radio Future (Xbox)
5	Auto Modellista (PS2)
6	Final Fantasy XI (PS2)
7	Super Mario Advance 2 (GBA)
8	Golden Sun (GBA)
9	MOH: Allied Assault (PC)
10	Resident Evil (GC)

READER
From Aaron Hunter, Selly Oak

1	Silent Hill 2 (PS2)
2	Super Mario 64 (N64)
3	Mario Kart Super Circuit (GBA)
4	Grand Theft Auto III (PS2)
5	Dead Or Alive 2 (PS2)
6	Marvel Vs Capcom 2 (DC)
7	Castlevania (GBA)
8	Res Evil Code: Veronica X (PS2)
9	Final Fantasy IX (PSone)
10	Zelda: Majora's Mask (N64)

BEST EVER...
Sports games. By CVG

1	Virtua Tennis (DC)
2	ISS Pro Evolution 2 (PSone)
3	Super Tennis (SNES)
4	John Madden Football '94 (MD)
5	Pro Evolution Soccer (PS2)
6	Mario Golf (GBC)
7	Track & Field (PSone)
8	NBA Jam (SNES)
9	Super Punchout (SNES)
10	Brian Lara Cricket (PSone)

BRAINS OF CVG
Alex Simmons' Top 10 Games Ever

1	Zelda: Ocarina Of Time (N64)
2	Super Mario World (SNES)
3	GoldenEye (N64)
4	ISS Pro Evolution 2 (PSone)
5	Dungeon Master (Atari ST)
6	Mario Kart (SNES)
7	Mario 64 (N64)
8	Metal Gear Solid (PSone)
9	Tetris (GameBoy)
10	Star Wars (Arcade)

HUNTER'S MAILBAG

Got something to say? We'll let you shout it out to the world. Just put pen to paper and send your thoughts to: Hunter's Mailbag, CVG, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD, or email: mailbag.cvg@dennis.co.uk

This dog walks into a bar and the barman says: "Why the long face,?" and the dog replies, "I've just lost my job". Whaddaya mean it's not funny?

GOLDEN BONE

CLEVER BOY

How clever do you have to be to play videogames? I only ask because my mother and father both accuse me continually of lacking common sense and "the brains you were born with", comments based purely on the hours I spend playing Command & Conquer.

In comparison, the pair of them seem to dote on my older brother, Dean, who is in prison after an armed robbery he was involved with went wrong, leaving one of the gang members dead and a member of staff complaining about difficulty lifting heavy objects. Dean had told us he'd found a nice safe job, but we didn't realise he was being quite so literal.

My point is that Dean never played games. His life revolved around petty crime, teenage pregnancy and clothes from JD Sports, and now he's in prison. Whereas I have completed Metal Gear Solid twice, and last year I earned a scholarship to Cambridge.

Perhaps other readers have similar tales they'd like to share.

Phil, Cornwall

Thanks for your heartwarming letter, Phil. It not only points out the dangers of crime as a career, but also proves gaming and CVG can have a beneficial effect on basic literacy and numeracy. Surely the next step is to issue cops with copies of MGS2 instead of CS gas? In fact, let's make Snake Chief of Police. Vote now.

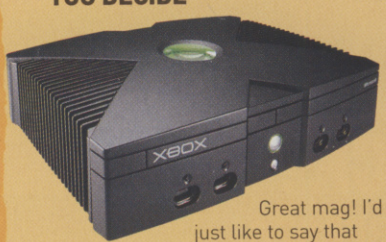
SHEESH! SOME PEOPLE...

This is my first time writing to you. I like fighting games a lot. What I've grown to love is the Japanese speech in the games. However, besides Soul Calibur and Dead Or Alive 2, I haven't a clue what they're saying. Could you translate these characters' words from a selection of games? [*A long list of game names followed but we cut 'em out*]. Thanks.

Brian Kennedy

God, Brian, what did your last translation droid malfunction of?

A LETTER, OR AN ADVERT? YOU DECIDE



Great mag! I'd just like to say that after reading that 'Meet the Stars of Xbox' feature last month, Xbox is the only console you'll need! It has all the games the PS2 has, and better ones too (except the likes of MGS2). Plus I reckon the Xbox version of MSR will beat PS2's GT3 easily!

Dreamcast seems (*seems?*) to have failed, PS2 is showing it isn't as good as Dreamcast, and GameCube looked good but frankly hasn't shaken off that kiddie image. Xbox is more powerful than the lot put together and there are heaps of games planned for it. Plus you get an 8Gb hard drive, DVD player and a fast modem too – for the same price (*er, £100 more*) as PS2. So see sense people and get yourself an Xbox.

Ciaran McCrisken

You sound like a puppet of the mighty Microsoft corporation. Go now, and answer the call of your paymasters.

ANOTHER ONE!

GameCube is now officially the fastest-selling console in history, selling over half a million units in its launch week. I feel so sorry for all you PS2 owners who think your console is good. I suppose you could buy two and use them as bookends.

Matty

Is it warm up Nintendo's arse, Matty? Anyway, Microsoft has been busily releasing figures that say otherwise.

PSYKOPOO. A MAD TURD AND NO MISTAKE

I am writing to make an enquiry. Where are my goddamn RPGs?

Yours indifferently,

Psykopoo

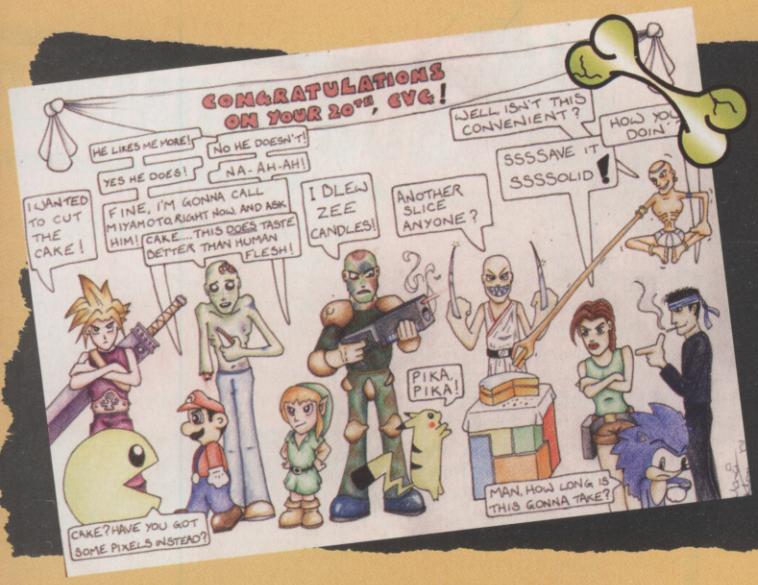
Er, where you last left them. Is that 'indifferent' enough for you?

CRUMBS, HE'S NOT FINISHED YET!

P.S. You may remember my last letter in which I happened to mention that Buffy naked might be a good incentive for my purchase of a Next-Gen console... little did I know then that Xbox would be making a Buffy game. [Goes on for ages being not very amusing at all].

Psykopoo

We've chosen not to remember your last letter.



DRAWINZ WOT YOU DUN

Aww shucks, you shouldn't have... but you did, so thanks. This masterpiece was created by a boy genius going by the name of Marcell, an enigmatic crayon-wielding guru who was raised by fairground gypsy face-painters. As you can see, this priceless work of visual magic proves that there are no limits to the beauty that one human being can create. Thank you, Marcell, for sharing your gift with the world. CVG is truly honoured to have you as a loyal reader. We mean it. Honest. No really...

Nor do we think games makers plan their games as 'incentives' for you to buy a next-gen console. Here's some tough news, mate: the world does not revolve around you. In fact, it revolves around us.

SHORT STUFF

Hi, CVG, love your mag. Could you print some Doom Advance pics please?
Your best fan, Thomas

CVG: *Sorry, Thomas, we don't want to, but check Issue 241 for our review or turn to page 106 for something way cooler.*

Your mag is the best and I buy you every month!
Craig Mannion

Dear Marj, I'm a...
Peter Ross

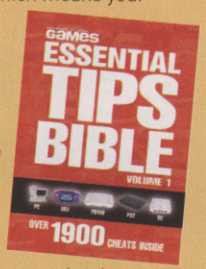
CVG: *Wrong mag, idiot.*

Last month I bought Half-Life: Blue Shift...
Anthony Reeves

CVG: *Sorry, Ant, no more sp...*

CHEATS ON THE LOOSE

Hi CVG, best mag in the world. But on your (Issue 241) cheats book (the ad) on the back says, 'More than 40,000 tips!' When I went onto your website (I'm level six now) it said 34,010, which means your book was wrong.
Spider



You're right. What sort of person would lie about cheats, eh? A liar, or – hey – a cheat. What's more, it takes a cheat to spot a theft. Or something. Oh, okay then, sorry, someone messed up.

OLD GIT WRITES

What happened to the lastability and gameplay of games? The greats of old are still playable today, Sensible Soccer, Super Skidmarks, Super Cars II and most old Atari and Amiga games.

They were simple in the graphics and sound department but they had great gameplay and a real sense of fun to play which kept you coming back. Today's games rely on outstanding graphics, which require ridiculous spec PCs to run and 3D sound, leaving little or no room for gameplay and lastability.

I recently bought Max Payne and completed it within two weeks (*er, don't you mean days?*). Then I simply shelved it and suspect I won't ever play it again because it was too short. Ditto Soldier Of Fortune. There wasn't enough variation to bring me back once I'd finished it. Sure, the graphics were mind-blowing but the whole blow-the-crap-outta-your-opponent style means at the end of the day it is a shallow gaming experience.
Vince, Essex

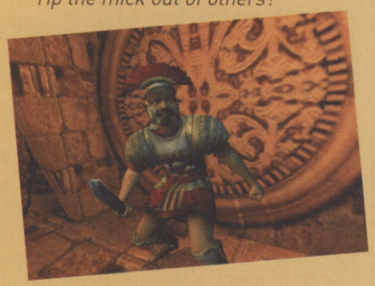
Cripes. Why do we keep attracting these old gits to our letters page? Listen, Vincent, if you want to play Sensible Soccer against the other residents at the home for the rest of your days we're not stopping you.

WE HELP SOMEONE!

What chance is there of Rare releasing a Perfect Dark sequel for the GameCube? Or any FPS like GoldenEye? A killer FPS is just what the GameCube needs to beat the PS2. That and a killer driving game like GT3 rather than the fun but not GT-like Mario Kart and Crazy Taxi.
Manandmadman

Perfect Dark 2 is indeed coming out for the GameCube, and if your FPS itch still needs scratching look out for Turok on the 'Cube as well.

And for atmospheric Resident Evil-style action, watch out for Eternal Darkness. Ever wondered why we give perfectly reasonable answers to some people, and just rip the mick out of others?



THIS MONTH'S INDECISIVE DUO

I was wondering which console I should get next, the PS2, Xbox or GameCube. What do you think?
Tom, Chichester

I need to know which console I should get, GameCube or Xbox?
Yeonathan Shachar

Sorry, but it comes down to more than just 'which is best'. GameCube will be about £100 cheaper than the Xbox, for example, but it comes out at least four months after the Xbox in the UK. And then there are the games. Which games do you like better?

CVG STINKERS

TOO PLOP FOR MELTING POT...

I have the best idea for a game, ever! You play John Williams – the musical genius who created the Star Wars and Indiana Jones music – in a game that plays like Shenmue with the humour and graphics of The Curse Of Monkey Island... (edited out by CVG)
Bloody Hell, Franklin

Stop right there. The depths of your delusion are too great to inflict any more on other readers.

DC. DEAD, DEAD, DEAD

Stop referring to the DC as 'dead'. It's far from dead. A console is dead when games are no longer being released for it, and the DC's got loads of great games still to come.
Liam McDonagh-Greaves

Actually, we'd say a console is dead when they stop manufacturing the console. Or dead when the people who make the console start doing games for other people. Sorry, mate. The DC's cool, but it's dead.

HAVE YOUR SAY

For this month's earth-shattering survey, we accosted a bunch of gamers shopping in London and asked what they thought of Metal Gear 2's 'secret' central character being Raiden instead of Solid Snake.

GREAT, SNAKE'S BORING	6%
DOESN'T MATTER, IT'LL STILL ROCK	47%
APPALLING – RAIDEN SUCKS	30%
WHO'S RAIDEN?	15%
METAL GEAR WHAT?	2%

ACTION REPLAY

GROOVY GAMING GEAR OF YESTERYEAR
#7: OMNIBOT

Year released: 1985
Manufacturer: Tomy

DID YOU KNOW?
By the year 2600 everyone will have a personal robot capable of doing homework, cooking and cleaning the toilet... maybe.

WHAT IS IT?
Omnibot Jr (shown here) is the youngest in a line of robots brought out by Tomy, capable of basic functions such as roaming around, carrying peanuts and bumping into things (a less sophisticated version now edits this very magazine). Omni Jr does the robot thing rather convincingly, with flashing eyes, a cool robot voice and the ability to track down the remote control if switched onto 'retrieve' mode. Next in the line was the Omnibot – about the same size as a small dog and very R2-D2 in appearance. This could play tapes, whizz around the room, bleep and 'robotise' your voice if you spoke into the remote control. But the Daddy of them all was the Omnibot 2000, with his controllable robot hands. This fella was fashioned after Number 5 from the movie Short Circuit and was the same height as a small child. Of course, all Omnibots come equipped with the obligatory drinks tray that will either impress or embarrass your friends, depending how old you are.

WHY DO I WANT ONE?
Because you can't afford an Aibo. Also Omnibot is becoming one of the most sought-after '80s toys due to its cool '70s retro styling.

LOOK OUT FOR
Missing bits. Omnibot and Omnibot 2000 came with base stations, drinks trays, rechargeable batteries and remote controls. See www.cis.net/~jeffbod/Omnibot/ for all the info you need to make an Omnibot work again. Tomy also made a range of mini robots that are easier to find but were only capable of zipping about, making tiny electric squeeks. The Hootbot is the rarest of these. Chatbot (pictured) allows you to record obscenities into its inbuilt tape recorder that can be activated via the remote control.

WHERE CAN I GET ONE?

Shock! horror! Yes, it's Ebay again. But the US site www.ebay.com is your best bet as spoilt, fat American kids generally got given better toys than us. Beware, as postage and packing will be around the $40 mark – but at least you'll find one! Usually photographed in comedy bandanna.

ALTERNATIVELY

If you're desperate for a robot to have around the house, you could try Ultimate Real Robots magazine (www.realrobots.com), who give away all the parts you need so you can build one yourself. Or see www.ir-vonline.com and check out IR-V, a stupid looking cyber-owl type thing that is billed as the first Wireless Internet-Responsive Robot.

BUG STOMPER

Spotted any good code cock-ups in a game recently? Any juicy little bugs that made you smile?

If so, we want to hear from you. Let your fellow gamers know about these code bloopers by sending any candidates you come across to mailbag.cvg@dennis.co.uk and we'll do the rest.

GRAND THEFT AUTO III
Format: PS2
Park a car in a hide-out, stand close enough so the garage door stays open and shoot the car until it blows up. Let the door close and when it opens up again the car will be repaired.
From Vicky, via e-mail

Seconds ago these were flaming wrecks

SMASH

WE LOVE TO BOIL, BURN,

Smash It Up has featured and annihilated some of the most worthless pieces of crud imaginable, but this month's victim takes the biscuit for monumental worthlessness. It's the official Sony Horizontal Stand for PS2. If you think you can beat this unholy sukka with an even more tragic videogame gadget, send it in and we'll make it suffer a slow and excruciating death.

Simply send your hated gaming objects (games or hardware) to the usual address, marked: Smash It Up. Sorry, but we can't return any entries. Only the best entry each month will get a replacement prize. Please state what game formats you own.

TELL US ABOUT THOSE GAMING GLITCHES

GRAN TURISMO 3 A-SPEC

Format: PS2

On the Trial Mountain stage near the end of a lap, I hit the grass bank on the final corner at high speed in my Mitsubishi and flew right through the bridge like a flying ghost.

From Ricky via email

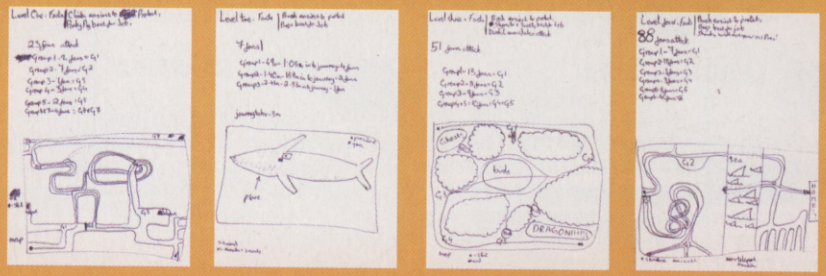
'Hang on, where's the track gone?'

MELTING POT

SEND US YOUR GAME IDEAS

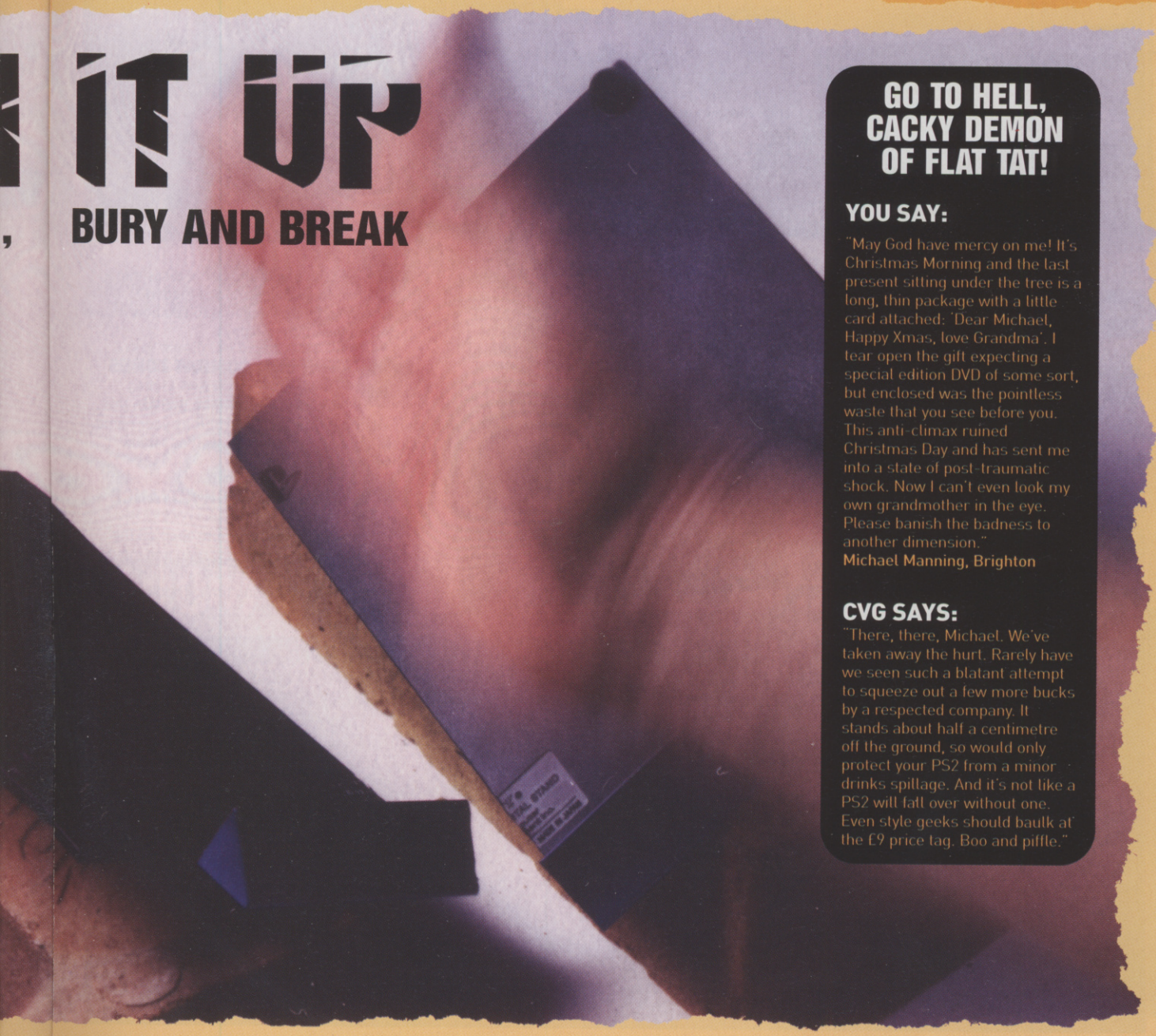
DEFEND THE PRESIDENT

You escort George Dubya Bush, protecting him from assassins. You are a Looney Tunes character, choosing from Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck or Porky Pig. Level One sees you on a skateboard and the President on a micro-scooter travelling from Washington to Miami. Level Two finds you going from Miami to London in a jet and Level Three sees you both using jetpacks, with more... (etc, etc, snore, snore, snore) **© James Watt, Lerwick**



IT UP

BURY AND BREAK



GO TO HELL, CACKY DEMON OF FLAT TAT!

YOU SAY:

"May God have mercy on me! It's Christmas Morning and the last present sitting under the tree is a long, thin package with a little card attached: 'Dear Michael, Happy Xmas, love Grandma'. I tear open the gift expecting a special edition DVD of some sort, but enclosed was the pointless waste that you see before you. This anti-climax ruined Christmas Day and has sent me into a state of post-traumatic shock. Now I can't even look my own grandmother in the eye. Please banish the badness to another dimension."

Michael Manning, Brighton

CVG SAYS:

"There, there, Michael. We've taken away the hurt. Rarely have we seen such a blatant attempt to squeeze out a few more bucks by a respected company. It stands about half a centimetre off the ground, so would only protect your PS2 from a minor drinks spillage. And it's not like a PS2 will fall over without one. Even style geeks should baulk at the £9 price tag. Boo and piffle."

THE DOGHOUSE

BEWARE: THESE CHEATS CAN BITE!

Our fluffy mutt has a nose for cheats. In fact, other than peeing on trees, there's nothing beats a good whiff of foul play. So if you sniff out any decent cheats, send them in. Just make sure they're good ones, 'cos Hunter goes for the nuts.

PROJECT EDEN

During the game enter the main menu (the one that shows extra weapons down the right-hand side) and stand still. Hold down the Select button and then rotate the left analog stick clockwise three times. This is quite tricky so do it slowly and smoothly. Once you have done it there should be a small green thing in the bottom right corner. Select this to activate the cheat menu.

ATLANTIS: THE LOST EMPIRE

When you get to the password screen, enter one of the following passwords to access a new level. Cheat sent in by Vince Mainolfi.

LEVEL	PASSWORD
Level 2	BMQDNPJS
Level 3	BRZSGZDY
Level 4	BVMJFYLG
Level 5	B7JHPMHC
Level 6	C6XQLUNF
End	COCNQQIY

SOUL REAVER 2

You will notice at the main menu in Options that there are lots of bonus materials, many of which are locked. To unlock all of them press Left, Triangle, Right, Triangle, Down, Circle, X. You will get a message confirming you did it correctly. There are lots of little bits to see, the best being the voice out-takes.

ECKS VS SEVER

We have codes for the single-player levels in this top Game Boy Advance shooter, so if you find a level too hard, simply stick these in to progress.

LEVEL	ECKS LEVELS	SEVER LEVELS
2	EXTREME	SEVERE
3	EXCITE	SURVIVE
4	EXCAVATE	SAVANT
5	EXCALIBUR	SUFFER
6	EXTORT	SULPHER
7	EXPIRE	SERVE
8	EXACT	SEETHE
9	EXHALE	SEVERAL
10	EXHUME	SEVERANCE
11	EXONERATE	SAVAGE
12	EXPEL	SACROSANCT

RED FACTION

Press '~' during the game to bring up the console and type in one of the following.

Bighugmug	Ammo and weapons
Heehoo	Fly mode
Vivalahelvig	God mode

SHENMUE 2

Place one of the game discs into a PC CD drive to discover a ton of hidden artwork. Also finish the game to see how it started its life in the old days.

TOP GUN COMBAT ZONES

To unlock everything that's in this game simply type in URALOSER as your name. You will get all the levels as well as all the awesome planes.

DONALD DUCK ADVANCE

Want a password to open all the levels? Enter the password screen and input 2 C 1 L T D ! P. That should make life much easier. You'll finish it in no time. Thanks again to Vince Mainolfi for this cheat.

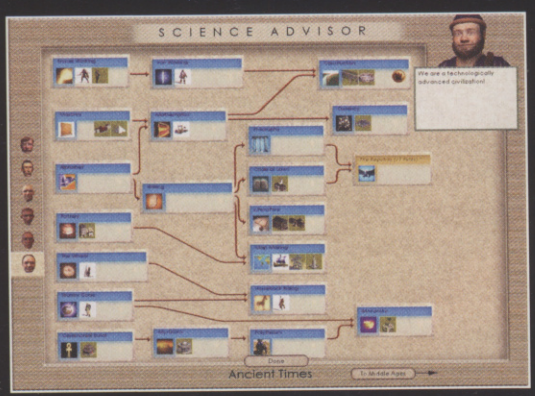
CIVILISATION III

In contrast to Civilisation II there is no easy cheat menu in this version, but do not let that put you off.

If you're up against it and need to do a dirty, use the Civ3 Edit option. Run Civ3 Edit and select Tools, then click on 'Use default rules' to change the start settings.

Next, choose the Civilisations tab, pick a civ and start them off with extra Advances. Doing this will give you the advantage.

Getting a scientific boost at the start of the game will give you a distinct advantage over your rivals



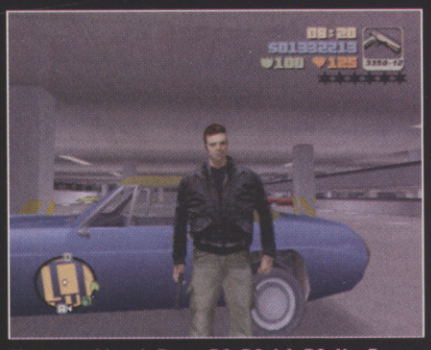
Use this to discover Iron Working so your first bunch of Settlers can build a city with some iron. That should help

GRAND THEFT AUTO III

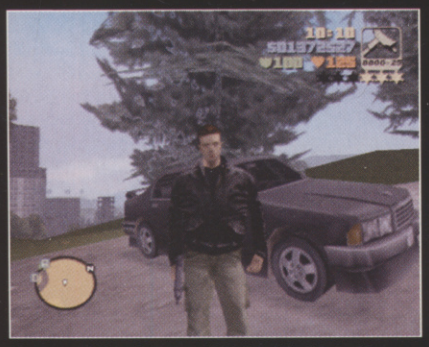
This game has a *lot* of cheats. To access them input the following codes while playing the game. You should get a confirmation message if you do it correctly. Some may not make themselves immediately apparent but they definitely all work. The Tank, for example, will drop from the sky somewhere nearby, so make sure you use the cheat in an open space so you can see where it lands.

Tank: Press Circle (x6), R1, L2, L1, Triangle, Circle, Triangle during gameplay

Dodo: Press Right, R2, Circle, R1, L2, Down, L1, R1 during gameplay



No wanted level: Press R2, R2, L1, R2, Up, Down, Up, Down, Up, Down during gameplay



Up wanted level: Press R2, R2, L1, R2, Left, Right, Left, Right, Left during gameplay

All weapons: Press R2, R2, L1, R2, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up during gameplay

Health: Press R2, R2, L1, R1, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up during gameplay

YOUR BEST TIPS

Every month the best reader tip will be printed and will score one of the latest games as a prize. Send your tips to: barny_zoeller@dennis.co.uk or

THE DOGHOUSE,
COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES,
DENNIS PUBLISHING,
30 CLEVELAND STREET,
LONDON W1T 4JD.

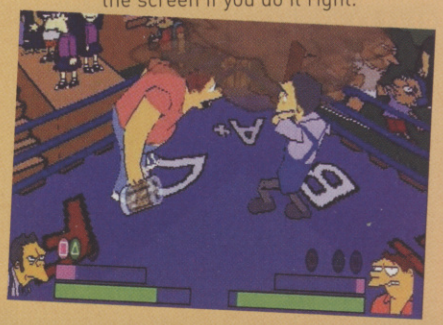
SIMPSONS WRESTLING

BONUS RING: Press Circle, R2, R1, Circle, R2, R1 at the 'Press Start' screen. You should hear a noise and get a message flash on the top of the screen if you do it right.

UNLIMITED HEALTH: Press Circle, R1, R1, R1, Right, Left at the 'Press Start' screen or after pausing gameplay. You should hear a noise and get a message flash on the top of the screen if you do it correctly.

UNLIMITED ENERGY: Press Circle, R1, R1, R1, Down, Up at the 'Press Start' screen or after pausing gameplay. Again, if you enter the code correctly you should hear a noise and a short message will flash on the top of the screen.

MULTI-ROPE ATTACK: Press Circle, R1, R1, R1, Up, Down at the 'Press Start' screen or after pausing gameplay. Once more, you should hear a noise and get a message flash on the top of the screen if you do it right.



DOOM

Doom is the grandfather of first-person shooters and has GBA cheat codes to match. So if the game is giving you a headache, use these codes to brighten up your day. If you don't wanna cheat but keep getting stuck, then use these simple tips: learn to fire while strafing – this is the best way to avoid incoming attacks. Also try to take it slowly, as running into a room full of beasties will result in you getting mashed up. And concentrate on being accurate so that you can conserve your ammo for when you really need it.

God mode: Pause the game, then hold L + R and press A, A, B, A, A, A, A, A

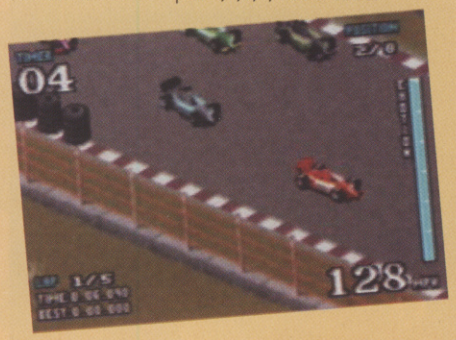
Weapons/Keys/Items: Pause the game, then hold L + R and press A, B, B, A, A, A, A, A

Invincible: Pause the game, then hold L + R and press B, B, B, A, A, A, A, A

DRIVEN

A surprisingly good racer for your GBA, with tons of tracks.

CARS AND TRACKS: To unlock nearly all the cars and tracks input 2,9,8,0,1 as a code.



REALLY STUCK ?

Absolutely stumped on a game? Ridiculed by your mates? There is hope: The Computer And Video Games Tips Helpline.

0906 466 4659

Open seven days a week, 8am-11pm. On the very rare occasion that they can't help, your query will be passed on to a support team, who guarantees to find you an answer within 24 hours.

Calls cost £1.50 per minute at all times. Charges will appear on your standard telephone bill. If you do not pay the bill yourself, seek permission from whoever does before calling. In case of problems, please call Customer Services on 0870 800 6155.

ARCTIC THUNDER

NO DRONES MODE: Press Square, Square, Circle, Circle, L1, R1, Start at the main menu screen. This has no effect in point races.

EXPERT MODE: Press Circle, Square, Circle, Circle, Square, Start at the main menu screen. This has no effect in point races.

EVERYONE INVISIBLE MODE: Press Square, Circle, Square, R2, Circle, Circle, Start at main menu screen. Again, this has no effect in points races.

NO POWER-UPS MODE: Press Square, Square, Circle, Square, R2, Square, Start at main menu screen. Guess what? This has no effect in points races.

WORLD DESTRUCTION LEAGUE: WAR JETZ

As you can see, this game has more levels than you can shake a large stick-shaped missle at. Here are the passwords so you can play on every single one, no excuses.

LEVEL	PASSWORD
Panama 2	JBVKWNBBCBQM
Panama 3	MDKKWYFTKBQM
Australia 1	MHZKWTJMQBQM
Australia 2	ZBCKXPBHNBQM
Australia 3	LDRKXYFZTBQM
Thailand 1	ZHHKXJJTBBQM
Thailand 2	TBPKYZBVHBQM
Thailand 3	KFFPJRFNPBQN
Rhine River 1	YJVPJCJGVBQN
Rhine River 2	FCNPKXBVWBQN
Rhine River 3	PGDPKGFPDBQN
New York City 1	KKSPKRJHKBQN
New York City 2	VBFKPLHBWZBQN
New York City 3	WJYPLWFQGBQN
Rhine River 1	YJVPJCJGVBQN
Rhine River 2	FCNPKXBVWBQN
Rhine River 3	PGDPKGFPDBQN
Antarctica 1	CMPPLHJJNBQN
Antarctica 2	RKFPMYBZHBQN
Antarctica 3	GNVPMQFSNBQN
San Francisco 1	TRLPMBJLVBQN
San Francisco 2	SVMPNFBFVBQN
San Francisco 3	RXDPNHFYDBQN
Valhalla 1	XBXPNGKRKBQN
Valhalla 2	LPXKVMCQZBQM
Valhalla 3	QSMKVSGKHBQM

SMUGGLER'S RUN 2

Smuggler's Run 2: brilliant if you want to sample the great outdoors without leaving your bedroom. To help you along the way we've found some interesting cheats. Just tap in one of these codes, listen for the confirmation noise and you're on your way.

Invisibility: Pause during gameplay, then press R1, L1, L1, R2, L1, L1, L2

Lighter cars: Pause during gameplay, then press L1, R1, R1, L2, R2, R2

No gravity: Pause during gameplay, then press R1, R2, R1, R2, Up, Up, Up

Increase time warp: Pause during gameplay, then press R1, L1, L2, R2, Right, Right. This can be done up to three times

Decrease time warp: Pause during gameplay, then press R2, L2, L1, R1, Left, Left. This can be done up to three times

CHALLENGE CVG
BEAT US AND BOAST

This is where you get the exclusive opportunity to play us at our own game. Just follow the rules below and come see how good you are or how bad we are. Are you big enough to put your money where your mouth is? Then don't turn down this challenge – it's your one chance to humiliate the so-called 'experts'.

CHALLENGE 1

Game: Quake 3 Arena
Formats: PC/Mac
Rules: Highest frag count
To take part: Log on to our server called CVG House of Pain (ip 192.168.0.1 or 62.49.226.118) between 4-8pm on Monday 28 January

CHALLENGE 2

Games: Virtua Tennis 2/Return To Castle Wolfenstein/Burnout
Formats: DC/ PC/ PS2
Rules: We make 'em up as we go along
To take part: Send your name and contact details to the usual address. Mark the envelope Challenge CVG or e-mail: barny_zoeller@dennis.co.uk Write in no more than 20 words why you reckon you can have us. If you are one of the two best, be prepared to back up your words with action after we invite you to our dungeon where we'll slay you in brutal fashion. Come on then, you wimps.

You play the Germans, we blow your head off five times while you get us once. Don't like it? Then get off your backsides and do something about it

We set the time and see if you can beat it. Bet you all put up an embarrassing struggle and fail miserably. When you lose we'll laugh at you. Angry yet?

The Cheatmistress Presents

CHEATS UNLIMITED

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8 REASONS WHY METAL GEAR SOLID 2 IS THE BEST PS2 GAME YET

If you're buying a game in 2002, make sure this one is top of your list

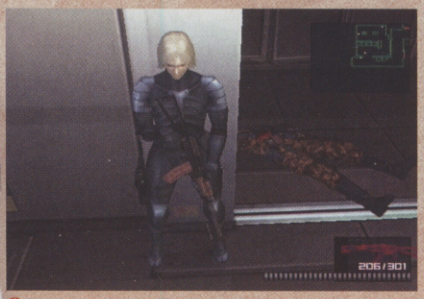
It's nearly here. Since the first whispers of a PlayStation 2 sequel to Metal Gear Solid, gamers have been feverish with anticipation. Trailers were put out on the web. A short demo was bundled with Zone Of The Enders. But as good as they both looked, they could only hint at the full majesty of the finished game.

In fact, Metal Gear: Sons Of Liberty is so impressive that many of you will struggle to think of a better game, ever. It's not a pure videogame in the same vein as Mario – it aspires to a different, more cinematic form of entertainment. And over the next seven pages, we highlight just eight of the many things that make the game great. Is it going to spoil it for you to see it? No way – this is just the tip of the iceberg.

RAIDEN

You've probably heard the star of MGS2 isn't Snake. That's part of the reason it's brilliant

Don the enemy uniform. Hide that awful hair



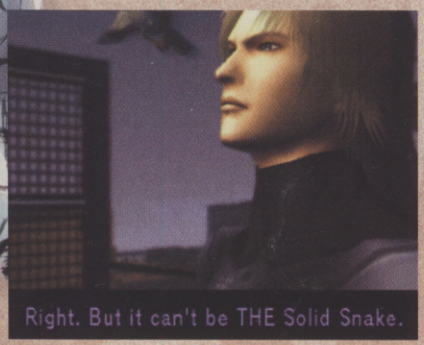
The natty suit helps him to move silently

Pay attention to the scanner in the top right, and stay out of the guards' cones of vision

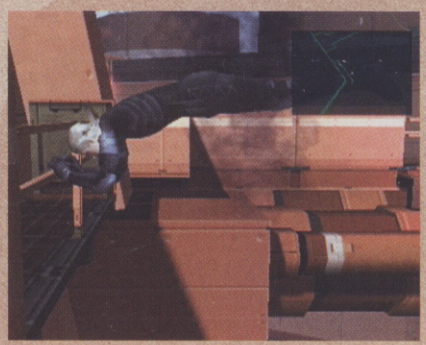
Metal Gear 2 has a new main man. Internet message boards are full of talk that Kojima let Metal Gear fans down by ditching Snake as the lead character. But this lot should have engaged their brains before talking. Who's the real star of MGS1? When a guard is about to kick over the box Snake is hiding in, do you think, 'Oh no. Snake's in trouble'? No. You think, 'I'm screwed,' and then you panic.

Using Raiden allows the plot to twist into brain-bending shapes. Who the hell is this guy? Good question – he barely knows himself. Snake, on the other hand, is a known quantity. You know his past, and because of that, you know what his agenda is. He's wily enough not to get screwed over again after what happened at Shadow Moses. Meanwhile, Raiden has got all Snake's moves, but none of his experience. He's more like you than Snake is. And having Raiden as the top dog means Snake is free to meander through the story at will, exciting you every time your paths cross.

We admit Raiden looks like a girl, and at one point in the game one of the characters actually grabs his nuts to check he's a fella. But Dante in Devil May Cry looks like a bit of a mincer as well, and he's one of the hardest characters in game history. Give Raiden a chance and you'll find, like we did, that the brilliance of the story depends on him.



Raiden idolises Solid Snake. Snake is the Don



Flip over the side until the guards pass by

Yes Raiden. We're pretty sure you killed him

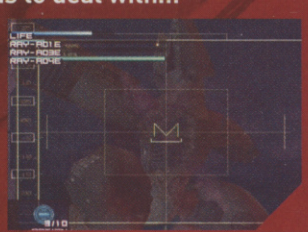
RAIDEN VS THE MECHS

Snake's had some pretty epic battles, but check out just one of the situations Raiden has to deal with...

So how hard is this new guy, Raiden? We'll just see...

Holy s**t, that's one, two, three Metal Gears trying to kick your ass

Raiden dodges like a maniac, and tries to take a shot or two back



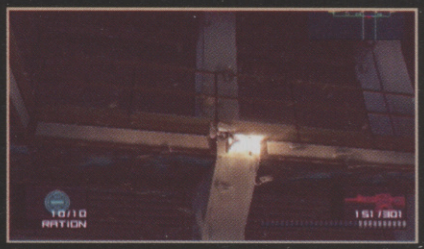
One mech down. That better not be a bunch more on the way!

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

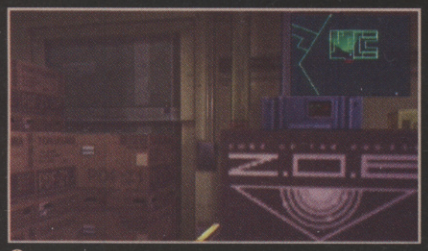
No videogame before goes as mad for the little details as Metal Gear Solid 2

In the swimming sections, stuff floats in the water such as newspapers and cola bottles

Smallest characters in MGS2? That'll be the flies. Buzzing around lights and old food

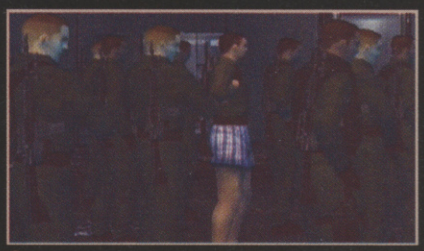


Get splashed looking around in first-person, and water droplets bead in the camera lens



Sniff about in the Parcel Rooms, and you find boxes filled with copies of Zone Of The Enders

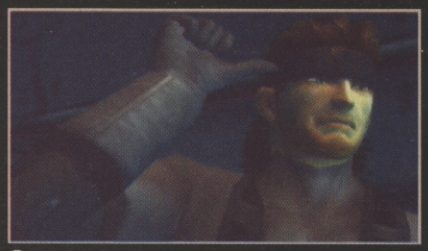
Damp areas have hundreds of roaches scuttling around. Stand on them and they squish



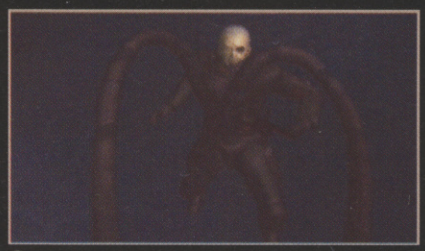
You'll miss it if you're not sharp, but lining up with these uniformed troops is a man in his pants

In normal games, you shoot bushes and nothing happens. In Metal Gear 2, leaves fall off and lie on the ground. Guards spot them. They wonder what's happened. You kill the guard. The radio on his dead body crackles – it's base wanting to know why he hasn't reported in. You break the radio. But it's too late, a patrol is already on the way.

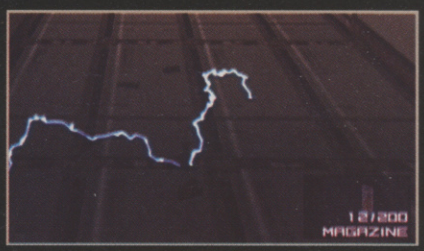
Look around, and you'll also spot little details that have been included in case you go looking for them. Try to look up a female hostage's skirt (pervert), and she closes her legs. Show Otacon a picture of a female character's breasts and he blushes. Want more examples? Try these...



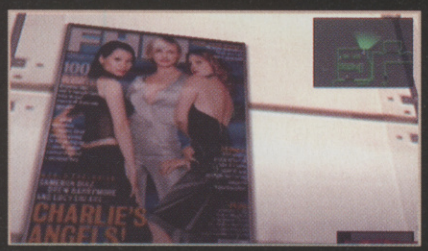
Snake never runs out of ammo cos he's still got his 'infinite ammo' bandanna from MGS1



Been grabbed by the throat? Hammer the right button to hold your breath

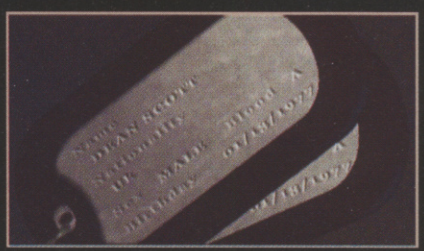


The floor is electrified. Place magazines on it and they catch fire and spent ammo cases spark



Soldiers like girly posters. Metal Gear 2 has lots of soldiers. And lots of girly posters

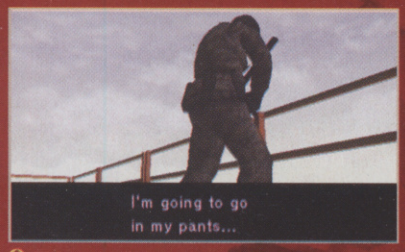
That seagull crap down there isn't just for show. Run on it, and you'll slip on your arse



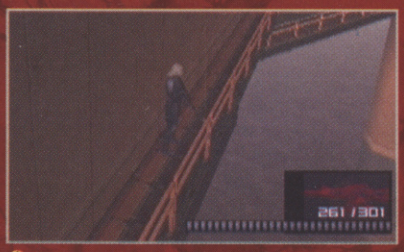
You key your name in a terminal at the start. It appears engraved on dog tags later

I'M DYING FOR A SLASH

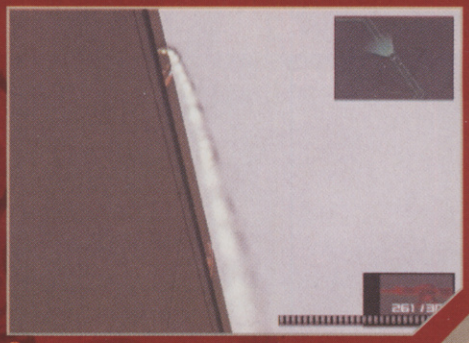
The guards in Metal Gear Solid 2 have to answer the call of nature



This guard has been caught short on duty



A golden shower awaits if you stand there



A first-person view? That's not a good idea

STEALTH

Metal Gear 2 takes sneaking around to another level

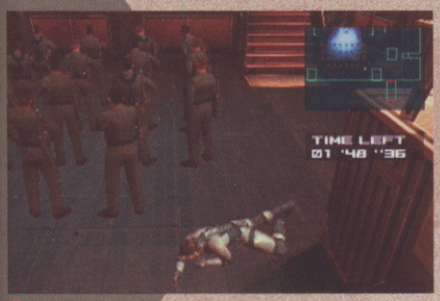
Not getting caught in MGS2 requires you to be on top of your game like never before. Guards spot your shadow if it protrudes round a corner. Open wounds leave tell-tale blood spots. Spy cameras are everywhere and suspicious boxes get checked.

And the golden rule is to find a disguise and remember to act like the guy who you're impersonating. So when the alarm sounds make sure you search like the rest of them. It's a lot to think about, but it's what makes MGS2 so exhilarating.

They can't see you if it's dark, unless they've got IR goggles too. Shoot out the lights and see

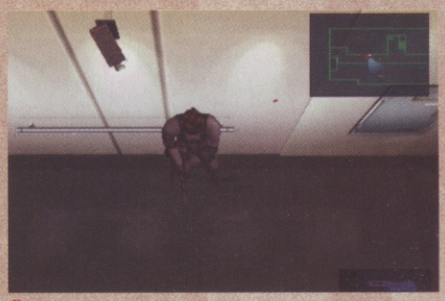
You won't survive a second with your civvies on. Get disguised, and pack the right piece

Watch the scanner carefully. Stalk past guards when they're looking the other way

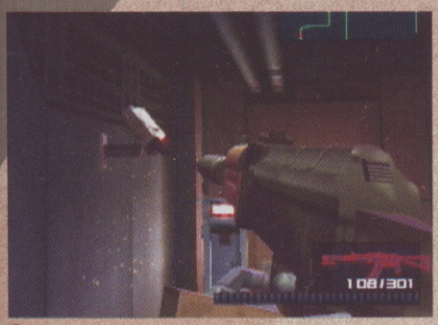


Recon in an army base? You'd better hit the deck and crawl. Get spotted and you're dead

A gun cypher. If it sees you, it'll fire at you and tell the enemy where you are. Snipe them down

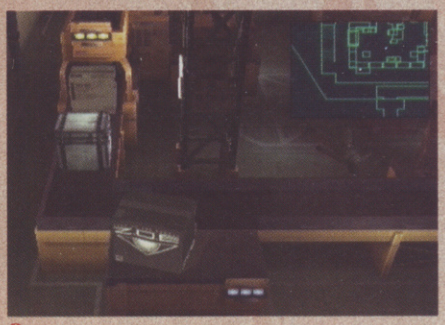


Get your back to the wall and you can shuffle right past security cameras like this one



Sometimes there's no alternative but to blow the video eye away and wait for the dust to settle

Guns make noise so silence guards with your bare hands and then conceal their bodies



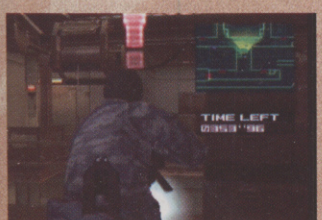
The old box trick. Get the right box on the right conveyor and you'll get moved from area to area

DOG TAGS

It's a small part of a huge game, but collecting ID tags becomes an obsession

Every character in MGS2 has a set of dog tags. Sneak up on guards and threaten them, and they hand 'em over. It's easy with one guard per room. With several, you need to tranquillise or distract the others first. There's a different set of tags on each level, with over 300 to get.

The more you have, the better secrets you unlock. One more thing: one of the tags bears the name Jean Luc Cougar – the star of blatant Metal Gear rip-off Operation Winback. Mr Kojima clearly has a sense of humour then.



Sneak up on a guard from behind with your gun drawn

Stick your piece in his face and he'll shake loose the dog tag

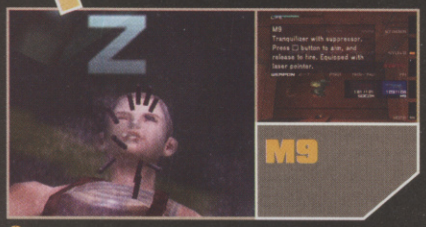
Kill the guard if you want, but make sure you grab the tag

Then you get to see the name of the bloke you did over. Sorry Ken

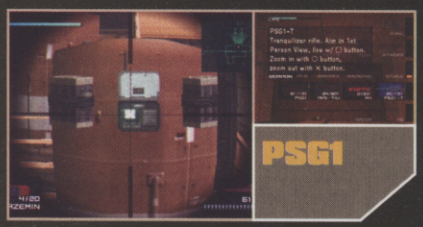
REASON 5

THE WEAPONS

You sneak some, then you kill some. With an arsenal to make Delta Force weep

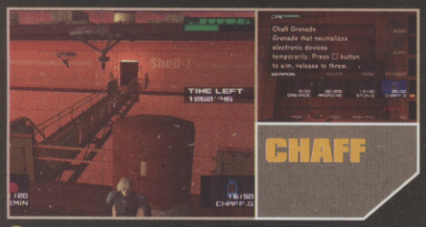


Your first weapon is a slow-firing tranquilliser gun with a laser sight

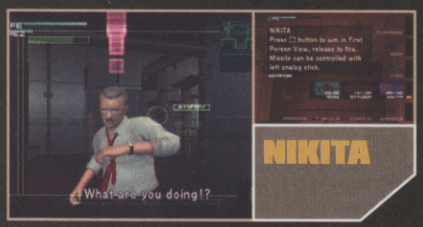


This sniper rifle can open an enemy's head at distance miles. Also handy for disarming bombs

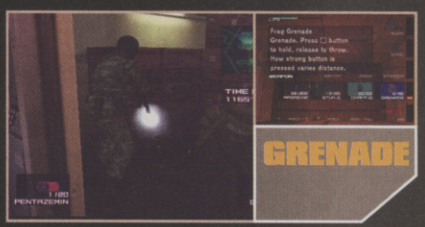
One of the most lethal weapons, the Stinger automatically locks a target and fires a missile



If you can't sneak past a spy camera, chuck one of these to scramble its circuits

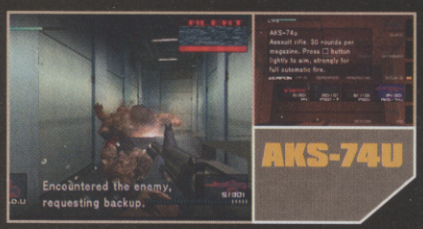


A fly-by-wire rocket with extremely limited ammo. You get to guide this baby yourself

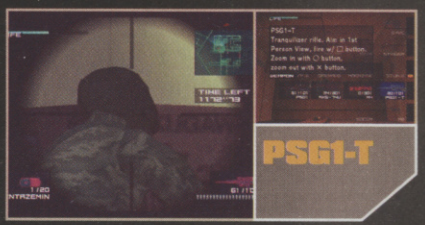


A little green thing shaped like a pineapple. You pull a pin, chuck it and people get hurt

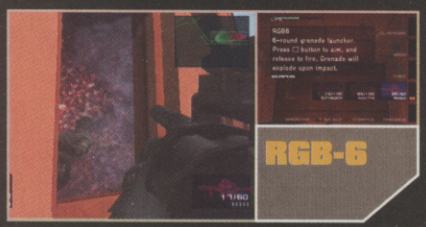
Your basic handgun. It's not an automatic, so bash the fire button to bust shots off



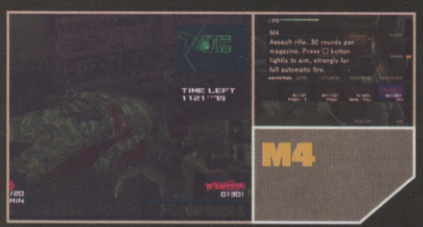
Ah, the delicious AKS-74u. Sprays automatic fire like a demon, and can even fit a silencer



Specially adapted sniper rifle that shoots tranquilliser darts. Perfect for the pacifist



Six shell grenade launcher. Best used at medium range to avoid damage yourself



The second of the machine guns. Less desirable than the AK because ammo is scarce

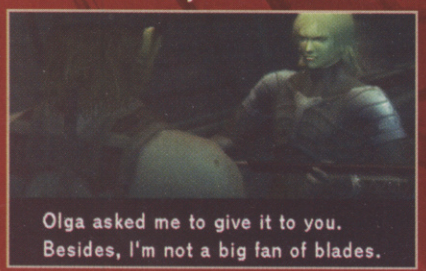
The grenade that doesn't hurt anyone. What's the use? It's like a chaff grenade for people

All new for MGS2 is the first-person aiming option that allows you to place an infrared bead right on an enemy's head. Squeeze off one round and it's goodnight – literally, if you're using tranquilliser darts.

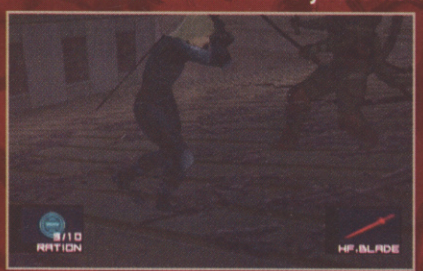
But some weapons are best saved for special occasions, such as the motion-tracking Stinger missiles or the fly-by-wire Nikita rockets. That's not to say you can't nuke an unsuspecting seagull with either, but you're probably best to save them for the twenty-foot high mechs and the swooping attack jet. Here's the full rundown on the ordinance Raiden ends up packing, despite not having any pockets to carry it all in.

RETURN OF THE NINJA SWORD

Remember Gray Fox's mint sword from Metal Gear Solid? That's yours now



A present, Snake? You shouldn't have



Swing it by yanking the right analog stick

This damn thing can deflect bullets too

THE BOSS BATTLES

Metal Gear Solid was famous for its ingenious boss fights. MGS2 will be too

Remember the Psycho Mantis battle in Metal Gear Solid? One of the finest moments in games history, no doubt about that. And Sniper Wolf and Revolver Ocelot? Mint. Metal Gear Solid 2 has more than its fair share of boss encounters, and as usual it's never as simple as just spraying lead at the bad guy. If you played the demo you will have fought Olga, so you'll know what we mean.

Here are four of our favourite boss encounters. No, we aren't going to tell you when or what order they come in, or what the strategies are you'll need to succeed. We don't want to spoil the game for you, we just want to show you yet another reason why Metal Gear Solid 2 alone pretty much justifies all the human endeavour that went into the invention of plastic.

REASON 6

VAMP

He walks on water. You shoot him in the head, early in the game, and he doesn't die. Oh, and he moves faster than the eye can see. The first time you meet him, he goes through an entire platoon of elite navy seals and leaves them in piles of guts all over the floor. Should be a piece of cake.

Stand still and you're toast. Vamp strikes quicker than Wolverine

Reckon you can shoot a moving underwater target? Fall in and die

Unload that automatic weapon into his body, and what? He's not dying...

FORTUNE

How'd she get her name? She's a freak of nature who's never unlucky on the battlefield, that's how. Bullets just whizz past her. Her apparent inability to die has given her a pretty simple philosophy: "I cannot be killed, so I might as well kill all the people I can." We don't quite see the logic, but there you go. She blames Snake for killing her dad.

There she is. Is she fit? Possibly. Has she got a giant cannon that could rip down a house? Definitely

That's what you're up against. Jagged bolts of blue lighting in a highly flammable environment. That's fair

FATMAN

That green suit is bomb proof. That kinda also means it's bullet proof

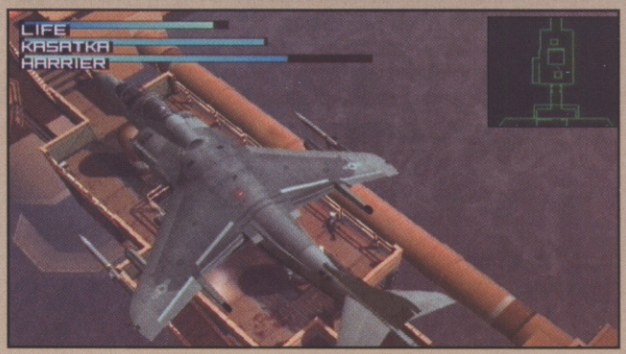
He's fat. He's a man. He tears about on roller skates dropping Semtex. He thinks he's Super Bomberman or something, and you've got to put an end to him before he bombs the whole of this structure to ground, killing hostages. He's not afraid of dying though, because he's a few sarnies short of a picnic.

He's quick on those skates. Find a way of slowing him down

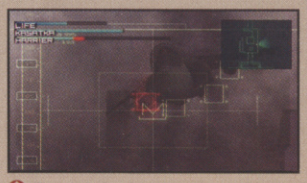
At my mercy, fat boy. You forgot to wear your helmet

HARRIER

You're on a thin rickety bridge with the Stinger. It's in the sky with lots of rockets



Harriers are heavily armed, manoeuvrable fighter jets built to take out whole bases. This one has a much smaller target – you. Luckily enough, you've got some friends nearby in a helicopter to chuck you down ammo as and when you need it. Might even toss you some health packs if you're taking a real hiding.



Track it in the sky, then give it hell with the guided missiles

Now you're in big trouble. Shoot down the rockets or run!

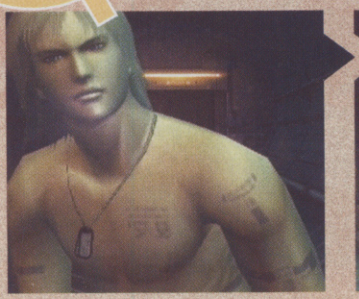
THE DREAM TEAM

REASON 7

Raiden and Solid ganging up to kick ass is one of the finest gaming moments ever

Raiden has been stripped of all his equipment and clothes. He's alone and on the run in the enemy base. But a saviour arrives. Snake.

Your heart leaps. One of videogaming's greatest heroes has stopped by to help you out. Then begins the sort of action movie buddy sequence that John Woo would sell his eyes to make. Covering each other's back, you and Snake take the fight to the heart of the enemy base. Guards pour in and you cut them down in twin streams of hot lead. You've gotta be careful not to shoot each other, and Raiden's nerves are at breaking point. Trust us, it's special.



Raiden, stripped naked with guards looking all over for him

Out of nowhere comes a saviour. Snake's got your clothes and guns

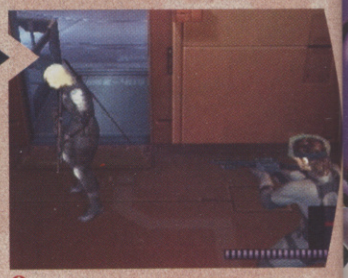
And then it begins. You and a gaming legend go on a killing spree

Make sure you don't shoot Snake when you're in first-person mode

Press on through the complex before reinforcements arrive

Take turns providing cover fire for each other. You'll live longer

You appreciate Snake a whole lot more when you're not playing as him



The lads get ready for the big showdown in the end of this section

Dispatch a succession of armed guards and sword-toting ninjas

Snake's a bit sharper with his aim than you are. He's a bit of a pro

A mysterious boss arrives. You leg it, and Snake takes over

Is this the end of Solid Snake? You'll just have to play the game...

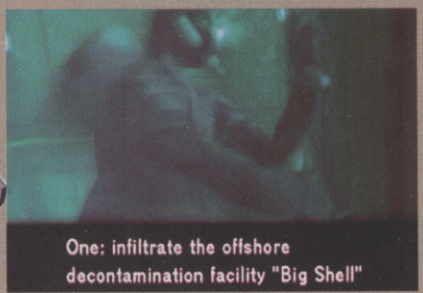
THE PLOT

The final reason why Metal Gear Solid 2 is the best PS2 game yet is it has the most engrossing plot in game history

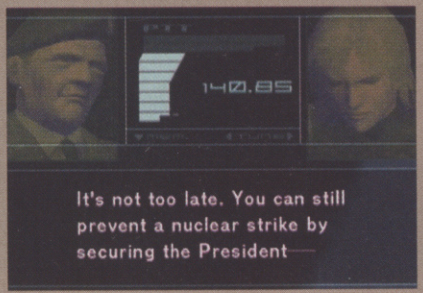
What happens in MGS2? What doesn't? After the brief Solid Snake episode, Raiden is called in to avert a hostage crisis on a giant off-shore clean-up facility. You soon realise all is not as it seems and every bleep of the Codec brings new info and a different understanding of events.

You'll have to play the game twice to fully grasp all the twists and turns. The most complex plot ever? Yes. Being a Kojima game, there's plenty of philosophy too.

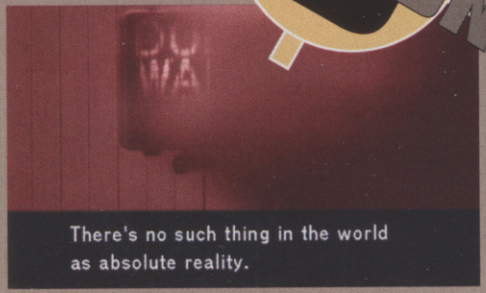
REASON 8



Frequent cutscenes in the game engine flesh out what's happening



Characters are queuing up to buzz you on Codec with new information



Sometimes, the game resorts to full-on FMV to give you some background info

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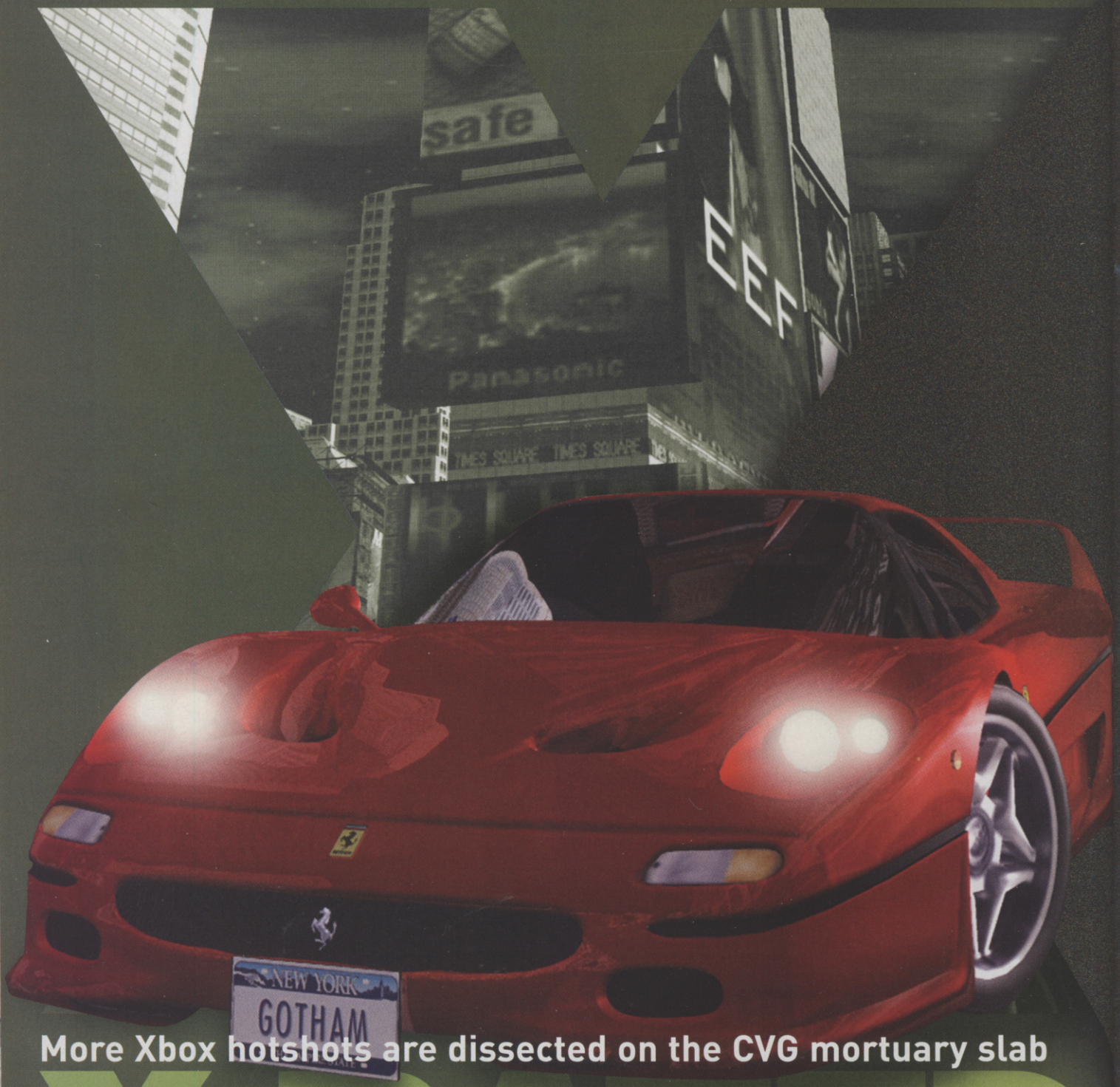
FORMAT: XBOX **OUT:** MARCH 14 (UK) NOW (US) **SCREENSHOTS:** VARIOUS



More Xbox hotshots are dissected on the CVG mortuary slab

X-RATED PART 2

In the second part of our review special, CVG returns to castle Xboxstein to investigate reports that Microsoft's hulking great beast could be about to reanimate console gaming in the UK. After the superb shooting shenanigans of Halo and the realistic yet rewarding 'boarding of Amped, will the unholy trinity of Project Gotham Racing, Dead Or Alive 3 and Munch's Oddysee make Xbox a must-have console for all?

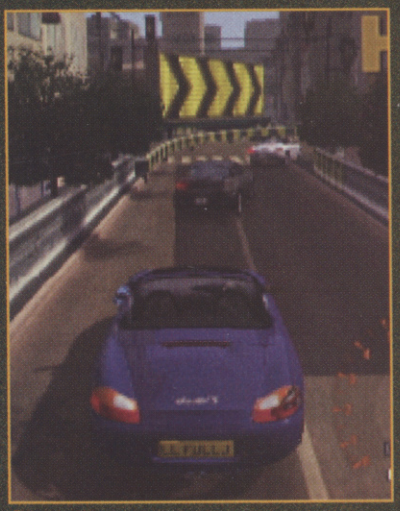
PROJECT GOTHAM RACING

Revolutionary racing remixed and revamped especially for Xbox

Take to two wheels on the streets of San Francisco and you win Kudos

Check out the detail inside the car – driver an' all

Car models are sweet – this is the US-only Beetle RSI



The narrow streets of Asakusa in Tokyo make for some close racing

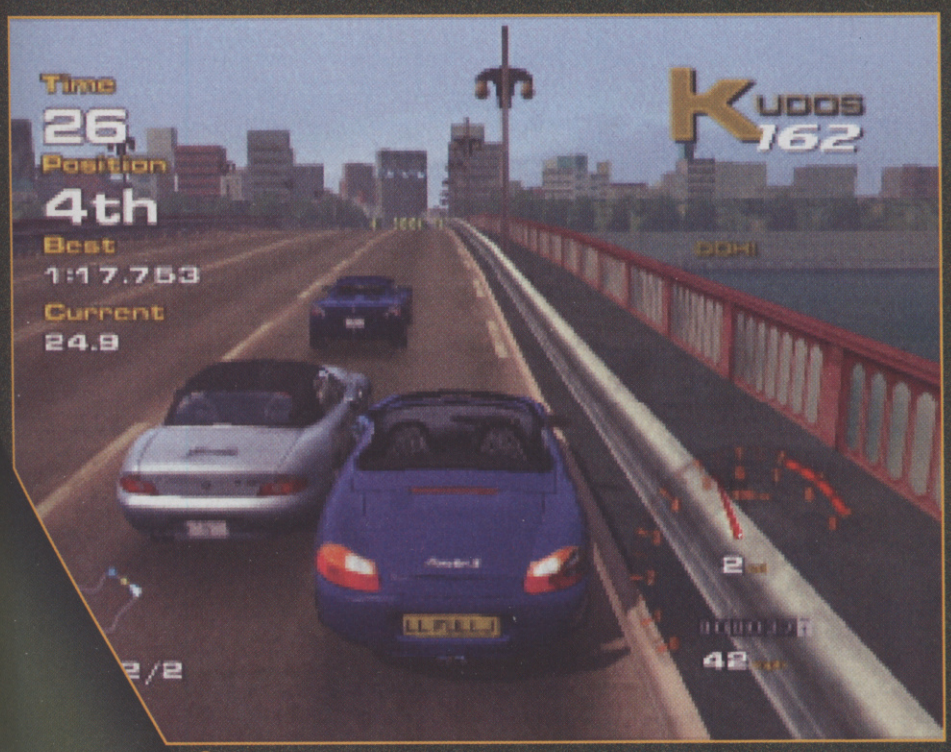
Format: Xbox
Cost: £44.99
Out: March 14
Players: 1-4
Developer: Bizarre Creations
Publisher: Microsoft

Project Gotham Racing has the heart and lungs of Metropolis Street Racer on Dreamcast, but the brains and skin are all-new. Gotham has better cars, better graphics, better handling and better challenges. A pretty good start for racing games on Xbox, then. And unlike MSR, maybe a few people might buy it this time.

Three famous areas each from New York, London, Tokyo and San Francisco have been photographed, filmed and recreated for you. And when we say recreated, we don't mean videogame approximations, we mean the real thing. If you know London or any of the other cities, you'll recognise every location and notice how they all fit together is spot-on.

Rather than just winning races, the emphasis in PGR is to drive well and earn Kudos points. These are awarded for things like powerslides, jumps and overtaking other cars, and every point you get is added to your overall score.

The Skyline GTR was one of the top cars in MSR. It's for amateurs in Gotham though – bring on the Ferraris!



Scrape cars together in the heat of a race like this and they'll get scratched up

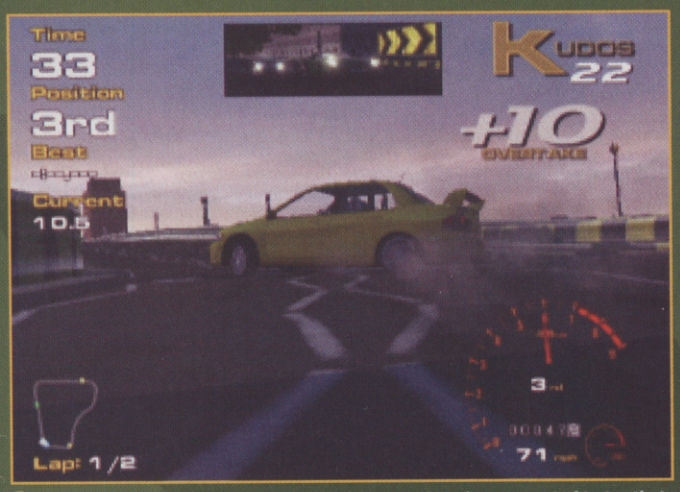
SLIDE RULES

The game has 200 circuits, and most are crammed into the main Kudos Challenge mode. This mode has 12 chapters, each containing up to 12 races. To complete a chapter you have to earn a medal in each one of its events, as opposed to racking up loads of Kudos points as in MSR. This has balanced things out, making it easier for beginners to progress and harder for experts to cheat.

New for Project Gotham is the Style Challenge, which will really push your driving skills to the max. For each cool move you do, whether it's passing a speed trap at full pelt, or taking a corner on two wheels, you earn Kudos. Perform moves one after the other and you can string combos together for extra points. It'll take you ages to work out the best way to drive each Style Challenge circuit, especially if you're after those gold medals.

QUICK, LET'S RACE

If you are short of time there are Quick Race and Arcade modes for ten minute blasts. Points you score here are added to



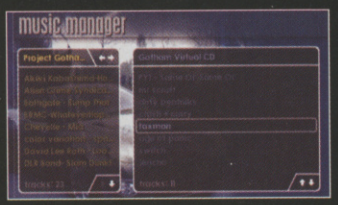
Sliding a Lancer Evo over Lambeth bridge – we've always wanted to try that

We've chosen the Corvette to tear up San Francisco – it drives like a barge

MIX IT UP MY SELECTA!

The Xbox's gargantuan hard drive means you can copy music off your own CDs and listen to it while playing PGR. And you even get radio announcements mixed in. So if you fancy doing handbrake turns around Leicester Square in a Mini while listening to The Beatles, then go ahead.

"Should 5 per cent appear too small"



"Be thankful I don't take it all"

"'Cause I'm the taxman, yeah I'm the taxman"

your overall ranking. Quick Race has 16 six-car burnouts, while Arcade is all skill challenges. Some of the most devious track designs can be found in here, with a few set up so you can just about lap them in one massive combo if you drive right on the limit of your handling.

You can always tell how close to a skid you are by listening to the sound of your wheels on the tarmac. With each one sampled separately, if you listen closely, you can hear which one is slipping at any point. And with Xbox's digital surround sound, if you've got the right kit you'll want to turn it up loud enough to make the neighbours scream. There are over 50

licensed music tracks too, all interspersed with radio chatter from real DJs. And if you don't like the built-in soundtrack, you can even make your own.

CRIMSON IDOL

The cities that surround you as you race are detailed but not phenomenal to look at. It's the cars that are the main attraction. Every curve and angle of 29 desirable motors has been reproduced, each with gleaming, fully reflective bodywork. The detail is immense too, with brake discs, lights, interiors and number plates all modelled separately.

Alongside your Nissan Skyline GT-Rs,

DRIVE OF YOUR LIFE

Driving in Gotham is about style and precision. You have to slide skillfully to earn those Kudos points. In Style Challenges, you can combo slides, jumps and checkpoint gates together to give massive Kudos multipliers, turning the game into a kind of Tony Hawk's for cars.

Nip through these cone gates for easy points

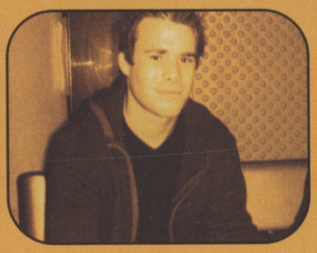
Powerslide and watch the Kudos rack up

+53 for two wheel action linking two gates!

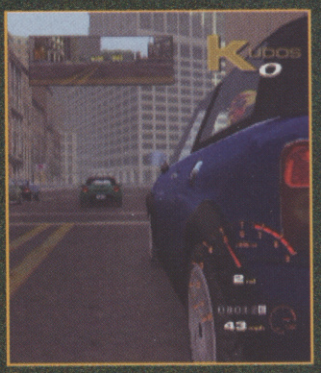
YOU SAY...

"Extremely cool. Getting the hang of the controls was really easy, and being able to drive the new Mini Cooper is fantastic"
CANDICE BACKMAN

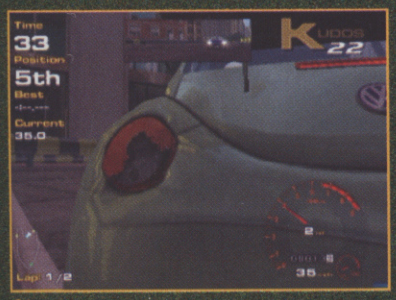
"I like it a lot, but it's painfully similar to MSR on DC. Some great graphical effects, and definitely one up on GT3 in this department"
LEWIS PACKWOOD



"It's nothing amazing, just a bog standard racer with amazing graphics. The scenarios aren't nearly as spectacular as GT3"
PHIL MARTIN



Adventure: New Mini races in New York City. The end



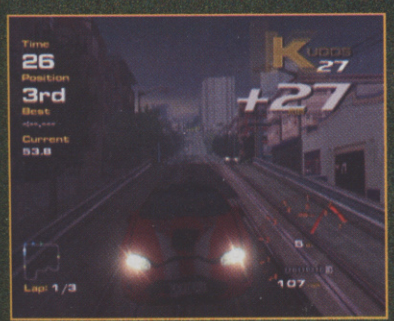
Look – car damage! On real cars!

Each type of car has been lovingly recreated to make Gotham one of the best looking racers ever. Bok!

and Ford Focus Cosworths, Gotham features the cream of the driving crop, including Ferraris and Porsches. Not even GT3 managed that, but Microsoft's cash and influence have secured the services of the world's best car makers and relaxed their attitude on vehicle damage to boot. So unlike most realistic driving games, you can smash up the cars, meaning you can add enough dents and scratches to that lush Ferrari to make it look like it's part of a banger race.

There are plenty of opportunities to try out the car damage model in Gotham's four-player split-screen mode. And though frame-rate and detail levels suffer with four, it's still smooth enough to be fully playable and plenty of fun.

With a focus on cool, flamboyant driving, and no car set-up options at all, Gotham sits perfectly on that fine line between the realism of Gran Turismo 3 and the all-out fun of Burnout, which makes it an ideal choice if you're a driving fan planning on getting an Xbox. It might feel like a bit of a rehash for all of you who played MSR to death – all seven of you – but there's enough new stuff in here for beginners and experts alike to enjoy.



Smash up your car's headlights during a night race and you'll have trouble seeing anything

CVG FACT

Project Gotham took an amazingly short ten months to make. Pretty impressive when you consider 95% of MSR's programming was thrown in the bin first.

CVG RECKONS

More fun than Gran Turismo 3, but less detailed. The sensible choice for racing-obsessed gamers looking for a challenge. STEVE F

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE...
Metropolis Street Racer (DC), Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec (PS2)

9/10

Hit the speed gate fast for a high score

Another massive slide and...

Combo! We'll take all of that

DEAD OR ALIVE 3

Xbox – ugly on the outside, but just look at the beauty within

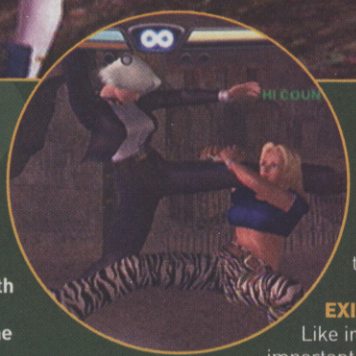
Yep, they're definitely white today

COST: £44.99
OUT: March 14
PLAYERS: 1-4
DEVELOPER: Team Ninja
PUBLISHER: Microsoft

Though famed for being 'the one with the bouncing jubblies', the Dead Or Alive series never managed to be the beat 'em up of choice for Joe Public. Microsoft wants that to change with this incredible-looking Xbox exclusive version. But they might just have to think again.

EAT ME

Of all the Xbox launch games, DOA3 really shows off the visual power the console is packing. In what way? Well, during a fight in the forest stage, hit an opponent against a tree and leaves will shower down from the impact on the trunk. While the fighters scuffle more, the leaves float realistically as kicks and punches cut through the air. Look closer and you'll notice that as the fighters move their clothes flap and crease, their bodies twisting and contorting.



Don't put so much starch in them next time round

EXIT STAGE LEFT

Like in DOA2, the stages play an important part in fights. You can hit opponents against objects such as boulders, branches and stalagmites and inflict some extra damage. Slam your opponent against certain objects and they break. And in the world of DOA, if a fight starts in a high place, you just know that there's the opportunity to send your foe deep down below.

On one level you're fighting on a huge pillar of rock, surrounded by a sheer cliff. Knock your opponent over the edge and the action drops down through the clouds to another ledge.

"Bend and stretch, now *lunge*. Good! Same time tomorrow, then?"

Go on girl – make it hurt! There's nothing better than seeing two women get it on

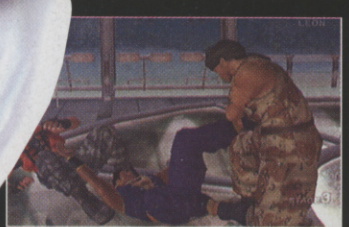
Human javelin throwing down to an artform

Sadly, fart-lighting isn't a bonus game, whatever this image suggests

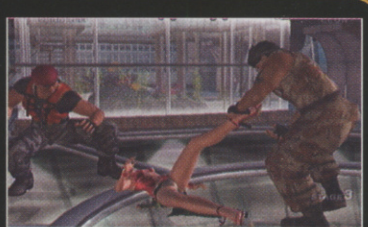
PARTY HARD

A saving grace of DOA3 is the Tag Battle mode. Here you get to pick a team of two fighters and proceed to take apart a rival double act.

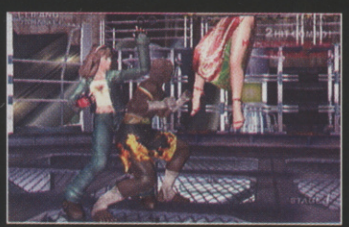
What separates this from most tag modes is that the fighters can do cool double-team moves and enter the action so fast that they can be used mid-combo to add extra damage. The action is so different to a one-on-one fight that it's almost like getting the sequel to DOA3 on the same disc.



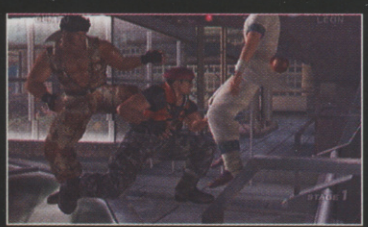
Last time we looked, that was illegal



Wow! Pull and make another wish



Don't just stand there, hit her again!



Oops! I think I've dislodged his pelvis

YOU SAY...

"Fantastic. It's really fast and the visuals are extremely sharp. The moves feel very slick and all the levels are amazing"
SIMON CARRIER

Was it just a regular back rub, or did you want extras?

MISSED OPPORTUNITY

However, this level design is something of a double-edged sword. Only a handful of the 14 levels are multi-tiered, and those that are not feel somehow empty in comparison. Also, it's a shame when backgrounds are this sumptuous that they remain precisely that – backgrounds. To show you such tantalisingly detailed environments and then not allow you to go there is a missed opportunity.

But it isn't the only let-down. The fights themselves haven't really progressed since DOA2. See, the emphasis in this game is not so much on the lethal attacking combos that the expert player can string together as it is on the more easily executed counters and reversals. While this more defensive fighting system does mean the battles can flow back and forth more than in other games, it certainly isn't every player's cup of tea.

On the character front there are three new combatants in there, including the English assassin Christie, but unfortunately the balance between them all is askew. Fight as the slower Leon or Bass, and you'll find yourself at a serious disadvantage going up against the likes of the nimbler Ayane and fast feet of Jann Lee.

Excellent Abba boots on show

No it's really frozen there, I swear!

YOU SAY...

"This is really cool. The character movements look so realistic and the fighting feels very natural. Brilliant"
VIVIEN 'AYUMI' LEE

CHEESY WOTSIT

Then there's the boss Omega, a character so excruciatingly corny that his presence almost undoes all the good work that's gone before. And the fact that the boss battle is played in a forced-perspective (making it difficult to judge the distance between the fighters) is equally annoying.

Our final nit-pick is with the end movies in Story mode. They look fantastic but are full of the kind of innovative moves and cool scenarios sorely lacking in the game itself. They show gang battles, arrows being caught mid-flight – the sort of stuff that could take the humble beat 'em up to the next level. Which is a step DOA3 has just fallen short of taking.

Any guesses for what Tina used to do before becoming a wrestler? That's right, once a proctologist, always...

CVG RECKONS

A great-looking game, but not the best fighter around. Critics will accuse it of just being a prettier DOA2. It's still good fun, yet you can't help but wish more of the looks had rubbed off on the gameplay too. ALEX H

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE...
Soul Calibur (DC),
Virtua Fighter 4 (PS2)

8/10

ODDWORLD: MUNCH'S ODDYSEE

Learn to think outside the 'box in this quirky platform puzzler

Format: Xbox
Cost: TBC
Out: March
Players: 1
Developer: Oddworld Inhabitants
Publisher: Microsoft

Animal cruelty, social injustice and a one-legged, web-footed hero in a rusty wheelchair. Not things you'd usually expect in a platformer, but then this is Oddworld – the kind of place where fart gags are still funny, vending machines give you special powers, and where you can dazzle your mates with the graphical razzamatazz of your new console. Parp!

Tzzzt! Zap the Vykkers guys with Munch's souped-up sonar

Don't tackle this guy head-on, possess him instead

Munch is only good on land when he's in his wheelchair

Munch has the ability to hook up to machinery like this crane and drop bombs on unsuspecting drones below

YOU SAY...

"I was kind of disappointed. I expected more action and a lot more strategy. The story line's quite cute though"
KRIS STROLIA

BUT, MUNCH

Every new console needs an action-adventure hero and Munch is flying the platformer flag for Xbox. He's the last remaining Gabbit on Oddworld, and is joined by PSone hero Abe, a Mudokon. The pair have to rescue all the Mudokons and Fuzzles who the bad guys at Vykkers labs are using as slave labour and prime specimens in nasty experiments.

Munch and Abe can only progress by using teamwork, lots of brainpower and by rescuing and then commanding groups of obedient Mudokons and Fuzzles.

Like the previous Abe adventures, Munch's Oddysee uses Gamespeak. By pressing the corresponding button on the pad, Abe or Munch will burp commands at their followers. You can get the poor suckers to attack enemies, stay put to act as decoys, or to work to help you solve puzzles. If they get on your nerves you can even slap them about a bit.

Each of the game's massive levels involves using plenty of trial and error to progress. Death will strike many times, as will hair-yanking frustration. Figuring out the correct sequence of actions is fairly rewarding but the linear gameplay never lets you escape the feeling that you are simply acting out what the developers want you to do, instead of actually being part of this gorgeously drawn world.

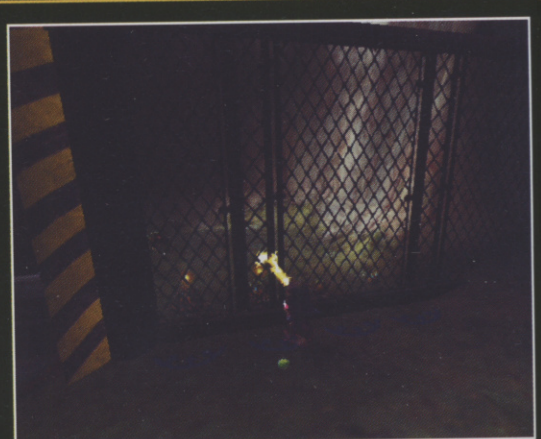
NEW AND IMPROVED

Oddworld tries to give players new challenges in the puzzles, and mostly succeeds. The various elements will be familiar to most people, such as using machines to pass where you can't go or luring enemies to their death in minefields. But they all have an original spin on them and the best thing about the game is the way it really makes you think

BABY THINK TWICE

If you're the type of freak who loves nothing more than twiddling a Rubik's cube between your fingers, you'll love Oddworld on Xbox. The game is one huge puzzle split into lots of little ones. Even the action sections where you get to tear Sligs and Slogs limb from limb with meaty weapons have an element of puzzling to them. If you don't like to use your brain, then you'd best steer clear. This early puzzle is typical of what you'll find throughout.

Abe can't swim so you have to use Munch to navigate through all those mines in the water



Once on dry land again, use Munch's sonar to free the Fuzzles, who will then attack the Sligs and unlock the cell door

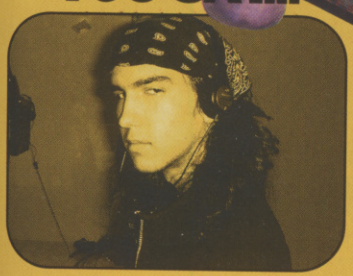
When Abe runs, his brainless buddies follow on behind

logically. The downside is that to free your trapped buddies, you often have to retread the same ground, repeating puzzles time and again.

Oddworld is a good game, and there's lots to enjoy, not least the incredible visual effects and finely crafted characters. Watching Abe and Munch bumble their way through puzzles is fun. And there's some depth in learning the best way to command your followers. Ultimately though, the repetitive gameplay and pointlessly frustrating sections sour the experience just a little too much to make this great.

Get your troops to attack and watch the horrible carnage unfold. War is hell

YOU SAY...



"Visually awesome. It's much better than the previous PC versions. I like the Gamespeak and the humour"
LAGOS-BROWN

Collecting the green Spooce shrubs lets you open doors and use machines – providing you have enough

CVG RECKONS

It has moments of real joy but they're smothered beneath frustrating and repetitive gameplay. A good game that could have been so much better. LEE

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY THESE...
Pikmin (GC import)
Banjo Tooie (N64)

7/10

With all the cell doors open, 'retire' any remaining enemies with your vending machine-enhanced sonar

With all your enemies dead, a warp pipe opens to allow Abe to cross the water and rescue the Mudokons from the newly opened cells

Only Abe can get the Mudokons to work, so it's he that has to get them chanting to open a route through to the next area

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Which new games are hot as a lava enema, and which are stone cold crap?

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WHAT THE SCORES MEAN

1 – Argh, it stinks!
2 – Abysmal
3 – Sucks a fat one
4 – Pretty dire
5 – Very average
6 – Hmm, could be for you
7 – Pretty tasty
8 – Very good
9 – Essential
10 – An unmissable belter that defines the genre

CVG CLASSIC AWARD

CLASSIC CVG CLASSIC

Only given to the very best games, setting the benchmark others in the genre are compared against. An essential purchase for every gamer.

Medal
Allied

A Medal Of Honor game on

COST: **£34.99**
OUT: **FEBRUARY 1**
PLAYERS: **1-32 (online)**
DEVELOPER: **2015 INC**
PUBLISHER: **EA**

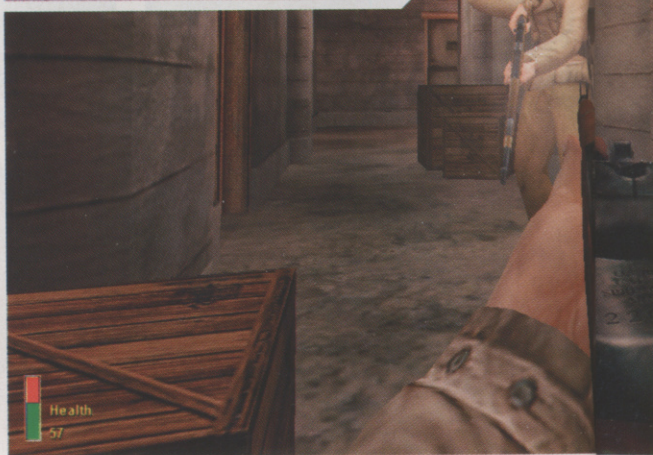
PC heads used to think it was their God-given right to expect the best first-person shooters exclusively on their machines. But the gun's in the other hand now, with games like Half-Life, Quake III and Unreal Tournament getting console conversions, and other shooters like Halo and Red Faction coming out on Xbox and PS2 before PC. Hell, the PC didn't even get a sniff of stuff like GoldenEye, Perfect Dark and TimeSplitters.

But just as it looked like the PC's suppressing fire over console shooters had been lifted, along comes Allied Assault to make console gamers jealous.

Up 'til now, the Medal Of Honor series was only available on PSone. How it must hurt that the latest in the series has ended up on PC – and only on PC. It gets worse: not only is Allied Assault better than

"Wrong way, bo now ge

Nice dress mate, let me put a few holes in it



The Invisible Man makes a cameo appearance early on

Typical ferry across the English Channel – choppy as hell and everyone trying to keep last night's curry in their stomachs

BANGALORE BEACH

Apparently Spielberg himself directed the Omaha Beach level in Allied Assault. It shows – when the ramp goes down, those in front of you will be cut to ribbons, and as you run up the beach, dozens of your comrades will be blown apart. Unfortunately you don't actually see dazed GIs searching for any severed limbs, not that you'd have time to help them look.

Your buddies take a swim

Get past those obstacles

The ramp goes down and all hell breaks loose

Look closely and you'll see facial expressions change. At last, fear has a face

Almost... there... Got... to... keep... on... going... Ain't Quicksave great?

Of Honor: Assault

PC. Be jealous... Be very jealous

boy, now get back in there and fight for your country!"

Once you get in a tank, it's time to create some real damage

Make sure you've got the right identification papers

The branches of trees move in the breeze. Nice touch

previous MOH games, but it even beats the previously untouchable Half-Life. It is, in a word, brilliant.

LIFE OF RYAN

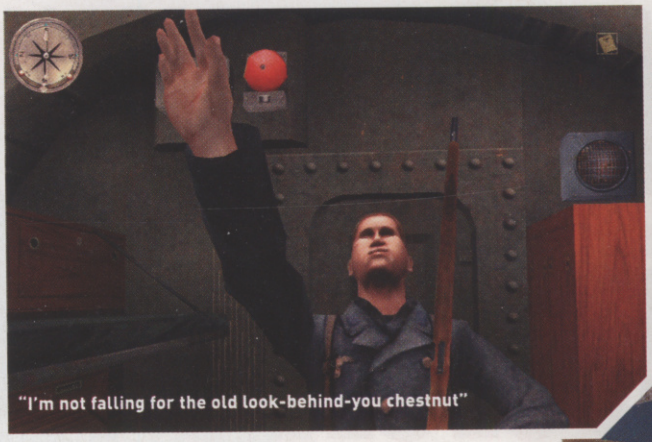
Those who have been keeping an eye on Allied Assault, or who perhaps have sneaked a look at the in-game movies EA has been releasing, should have some idea of why people have been getting hot under the helmet about this. In all but name it is basically the interactive equivalent of Saving Private Ryan – only without the soppy bits (or Tom Hanks).

Rain-soaked towns teeming with German snipers, peaceful meadows hiding machine-gun nests and a bridge that needs to be taken intact are just a few of the many levels in the game. And of course there is the Omaha Beach level, looking almost as if it's been taken straight out of the first half hour of Saving Private Ryan and extended to last two hours. It's arguably one of the best, most atmospheric missions ever devised.

But there's so much more to the game than Ryan's best bits. Before you even get to storm the beach there are well over six hours of Nazi-bashing to get through.

You begin the game in 1942 when it all looked rather bleak for the free world. Dispatched to Algeria, your first mission is to rescue a lost British agent and signal the landing for the invasion of German-occupied North Africa.

Needless to say it all goes belly-up at a Nazi checkpoint, and with half your platoon wiped out, you eventually find yourself planting explosives, firing a heavy machine-gun from the back of a jeep, laying waste to planes and truck-loads of soldiers, only to end up sneaking through submarines and blowing up secret equipment. The point is that even before the immense D-Day mission and those beyond, Allied Assault has already got its claws in you.



"I'm not falling for the old look-behind-you chestnut"

If you need some backup, call in airstrikes

INTELLIGENT SERVICE

What makes the game such a joy isn't so much the varied environments, the mix of Allied and German weapons, or the heady mix of all-guns-blazing action and tense headache-inducing stealth. No, what lifts the game above even Return To Castle Wolfenstein is the phenomenal AI.

As is standard these days, the enemy has sussed out how to hide behind wooden crates, lob grenades and outflank you, but what the bad guys do here that we haven't seen them do before is attack both intelligently and in force. Instead of hordes of brainless goons charging you across open spaces, this lot invariably use cover to close in on you, supporting each other with suppressing fire.

With sniper rifles at the ready, you'll quite often see the enemy pop their heads up to fire off a couple of shots, but when they realise you've got them pinned, they'll just poke their guns around the corner to save their faces from being blown off.

Intelligence hasn't just been doled out to the Germans. You'll regularly be fighting as part of a team with up to ten fellow Rangers. More than once we found ourselves pinned down from a machine-gun nest, only to see an American GI charge forward and take them out. If there was a key to give the team members a well deserved pat on the back, we would have used it a dozen times. In fact they're so useful you'll be gutted when the Germans pick off your battle buddies.

CVG FACT

A mission pack for Allied Assault is already in the advanced stages of development. Expect it by this summer.

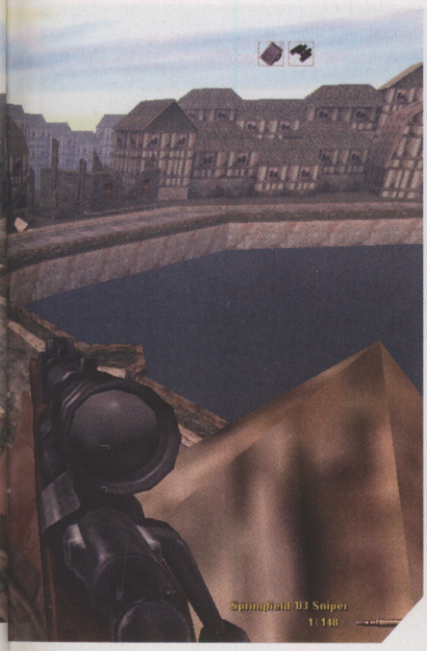
CAMERA, ACTION, CUT

If there were any sore points about Allied Assault, we forgot to make note of them while finishing the game. If anything, the lack of real cutscenes is a minor disappointment, as is the fact that there isn't a level to match the scale of Omaha Beach later on in the game.

Ever the thoughtful ones, the Germans always signpost their minefields. Thanks!

Cover your comrades and they'll cover you

Some missions require you to find a disguise

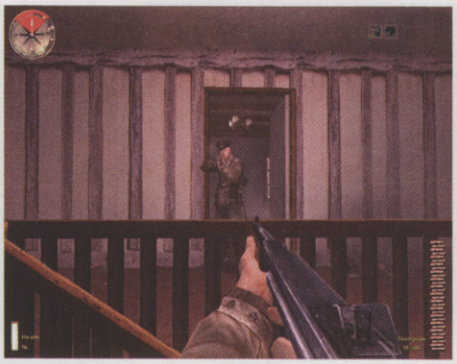


by aiming your binoculars

To make up for it, you do get to drive a tank, wear a gas mask, save prisoners and even meet the lovely Manon from Medal Of Honor: Underground on PSone.

Even better are the multiplayer maps, which range from standard issue deathmatch to a team-based return to Omaha Beach, where the Allies must destroy the gun emplacements.

All in all, Allied Assault beats Wolf, except graphically. While both use the Quake III engine, Wolf's characters and locations often seem more detailed and carefully crafted. But while you'll play through Wolf once or twice to find secret areas and hidden treasures, the beauty in replaying MOH is the brilliant AI and gritty atmopshere. The way that enemy soldiers appear so flexible means the next time you play they may react differently. Also the pace of the action constantly changes, where Wolf feels closer to Quake III's constant carnage.



Your compass conveniently tells you which direction you're being shot from

You can't lean in the one-player campaign. Why?

MULTIPLAYER MAYHEM

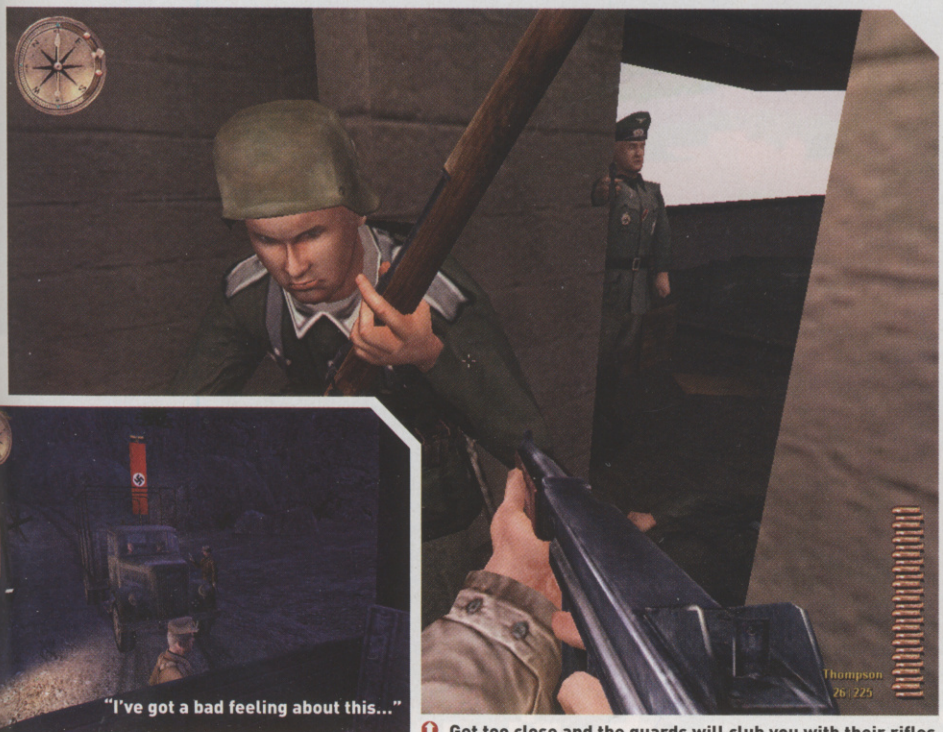
Maybe the Channel Tunnel security guards should sit up and take some tips from these chaps

Although Medal Of Honor offers a fine deathmatch game, and one that is perfectly suited to sniping, the team games are by far the best. While your allies all have US stars or German crosses floating over their heads, the enemy is another matter entirely. They're a great deal harder to spot, especially if they're wearing the right camouflage uniform.

Each player can also choose which primary weapon they'd like to specialise in. These range from bog-standard rifles to machine-guns and bazookas. There are no ammo boxes or health packs lying around though, so if you are desperately in need of some health points, you'll need to make a kill first. It's war, you know.

Set in World War II, MoH may not have the plot twists and suspense of Half-Life (no, there weren't any zombies in Nazi Germany, honest), but the missions are often nowhere near as straightforward as they seem at first. Unexpected airstrikes and tank battles change mission objectives and how you go about achieving them, giving you a feeling of heightened tension and adding changes of pace to missions, giving it that great replay value. And even when you've tired of D-Day and blowing up Arctic German bases, you'll still be there playing against your friends online. And Half-Life? You'll find it down the British Legion, drinking cheap beer and reliving its glory days.

Dodge the searchlights, or end up in a cell



Get too close and the guards will club you with their rifles

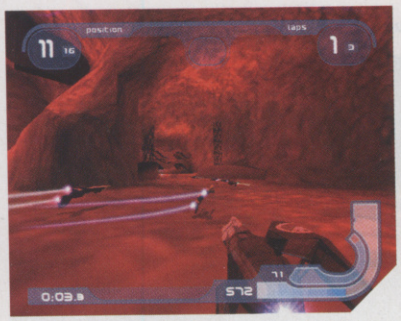
"I've got a bad feeling about this..."

CVG RECKONS

Forget Half-Life, this is the new king of PC first-person shooters. Long may its reign continue. **Rich**

9

If you like this try this...
Return To Castle Wolfenstein (PC)



Race through the insides of a giant boy

Like the M25 on a Monday – nasty

CVG FACT

Wipeout Fusion is supposedly set in the year 2150, a generation after the setting of the previous PSone games.

A novel approach to headlights, innit?

Wipeout Fusion

PS2 catches a case of the screaming ships. Fasten your seatbelt

COST: **£39.99**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1-2**
DEVELOPER: **SONY**
PUBLISHER: **SONY**

The holographic control panel rises from the glowing surface of your dashboard. With a complex gesture, you gun the repulsor engines and feel your hover racer hum with raw fusion power as you rise from the stables to the grid.

Your visor auto-slides over your head and as you flex your shoulders, the craft itself dips and slides. You are at one with machine, its reactions mirroring yours with astonishing precision. The grid is full. The starting holo flips to 'go' and you and another 15 racers shoot forward so fast it feels like you're falling. It can only be the ultimate future race: Wipeout.

At least icy roads don't matter to a hover racer

FUTURE SHOCK

A quick history lesson for those who've just arrived at Sony's party: Wipeout was the bad boy of PSone games, hanging around at the back of the class with its tie around its head, flicking ink pellets and getting universal respect.

Thing is, everyone else has moved on but Wipeout's still doing the same thing. It's still all about power-up hover racing at gratuitous speed with military-grade weaponry. What's new? The Challenge mode. What's that? Well, it throws specific tasks your way, such as taking out a certain number of enemies as you race, or beating time trials to unlock new ships,

Choose from one of the unlocked teams

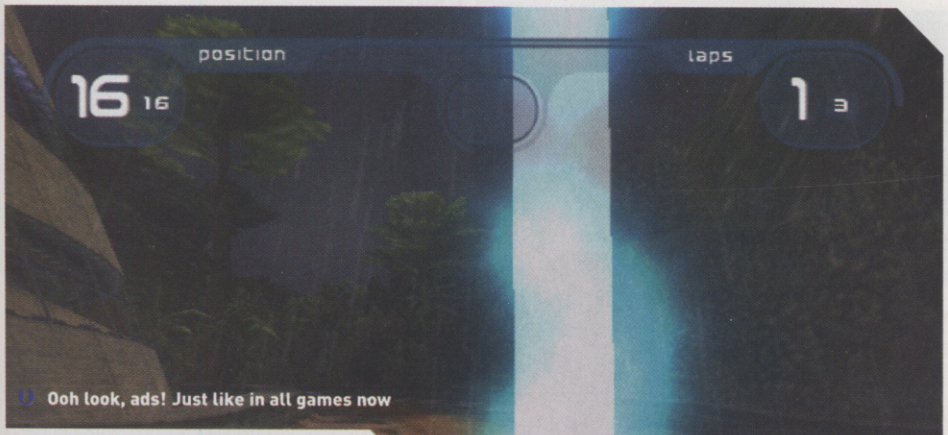
You get two pilots to every team. This bald lardy bloater will do for now, but his team-mate's a better driver. Gotta be brutal in this game – it's a bit like Pop Idol but with shocking auto violence

Take your starting place for the season's first race

CAREERING AHEAD

Working your way through the main career mode, AG League, isn't just a matter of winning races. Well alright, it is. This is Wipeout, after all. But there's enough choice of vehicles and customisation options to make you plan your tactics and upgrade options for each three-race section. Follow us on a fantastic voyage of speed, explosions and fat folk in hover racers. Here's how a typical race cycle pans out...

Florion Height. Wi



Ooh look, ads! Just like in all games now

is the speed. That almost physical feeling of thundering forward at hundreds of miles an hour just isn't there, except when you're at absolutely full speed and you've used a turbo power-up.

LAND OF CON-FUSION

The original Wipeout titles were so cleverly designed that your brain filled in the gaps and made it look better than it was. Now, in the world of PS2 hyper-realism, when you see a giant rotating cube by the side of the track you wonder what the hell it's doing there. And some space-age writing doesn't help its case.

Games got cool a while back, and it's nothing special to see style on the screen. And the 'banging choons' don't seem so great now every game has a proper soundtrack. Wipeout's not that bad – it's well-crafted and balanced, and the racing's surprisingly deep – but it just doesn't do it for us the way it used to. If we hadn't been expecting so much, we'd be more impressed. Ah well. There's always Wipeout Fusion 2...

weapons and other challenges. Apart from that there's AG League, where you win races to progress and get cash to soup up your vehicle. And Zone mode pits you all in a battle to the death. It's all good, if a little bit familiar, and it draws you in quickly, especially when you just know you can win next time if you upgrade your boost by that tiny bit extra, honest...

The graphics do look great in a kind of inorganic, antiseptic way. But the real disappointment

666? Satanic speed can only mean one thing: it's fighting time

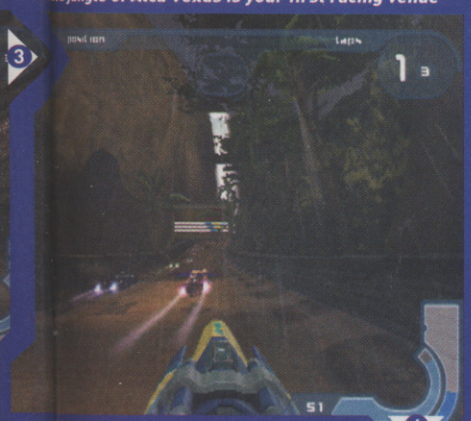
CVG RECKONS

A bit too well-behaved but still a great racer. Just don't expect the moon (except to race around...) **Joff**

7

If you like this try these...
Extreme-G3 (PS2)

The jungle of Alca Vexus is your first racing venue



ight's ext. Win to get points – it's not rocket science

Mandrashee's your final race. With enough points you'll be king of the league. Time to upgrade and return

COST: **£39.99**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1-4**
DEVELOPER: **ACCLAIM**
PUBLISHER: **ACCLAIM**

Legends Of Wrestling

Old gold or stinky spandex wrestler pants?

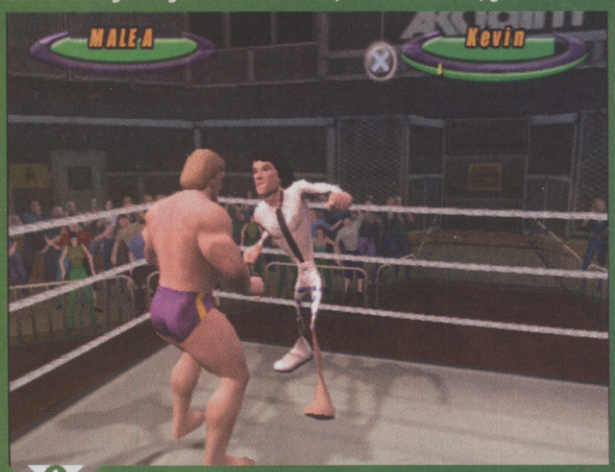
Ke-runch! Hulk Hogan executes a Piledriver on the Million Dollar Man and the crowd goes wild. But wait a minute, isn't the Hulkster some old guy who should be locked up in a rest home? Well yeah, in real life, but not in Legends Of Wrestling, which brings together 40 old-time wrestlers in one big ring-stinger of a grapple game.

You'll find Bret 'The Hitman' Hart and WWF commentator Jerry 'The King' Lawler, and old favourite Jimmy 'Superfly' Snuka gets in the ring with new WWF superstar Rob Van Dam too.

WOGAN VERSUS HOGAN

Our made-up wrestler Hulk Wogan is going to have a hard time getting to the top with a physique like that. Here's how things panned out when he tried to be a wrestling star.

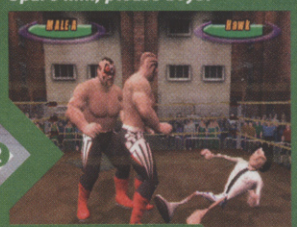
Starting out against a push-over, Wogan may be a little spindly of leg but he manages to get a few hits in. Go, matchstick man, go!



1

2

Spare him, please boys!



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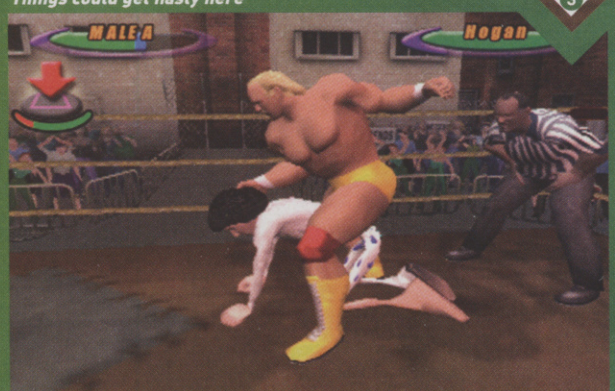
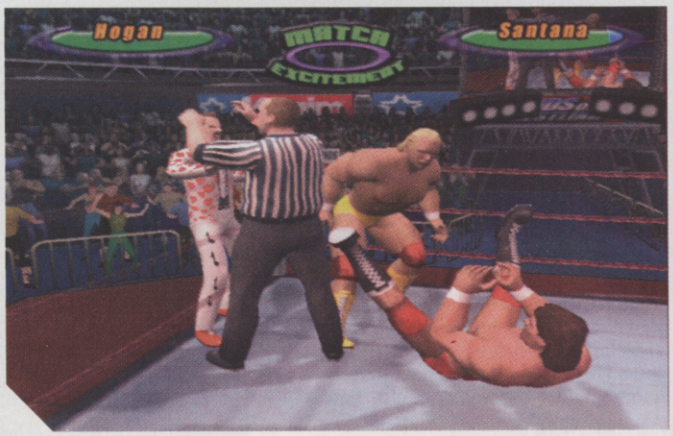
Up against a better contender. Things could get nasty here



The ultimate battle – Hogan versus Wogan! Ouch, that'll leave a mark...



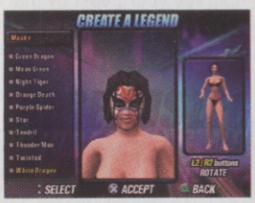
When the ref's back is turned, all hell breaks loose. That's gonna hurt...

KING WRINKLY

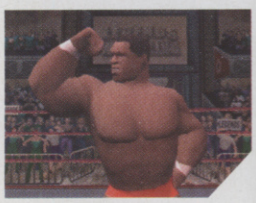
First things first, the fighters: the detail is spot on, and it's possible to pick out the contestants' expressions of rage, even when there's four in the ring.

As for fighting, you get the choice of a quick throw or a proper grapple, and you can block and punch. The only unusual aspect of fighting here is the counterattack – you have to watch your power bar and press the right button at the right time, so at least you need a bit of skill to reverse your opponent's attack.

But the fun really starts when you make your own character and try to get to the top of the heap. Unlike other recent wrestling games, LOW's career mode is exhaustive. First pick a home territory, then start rucking. And the crowd gets more excited depending on the coolness of your fighting style, so you're encouraged to experiment with new moves rather than stick to the same old gut punch.

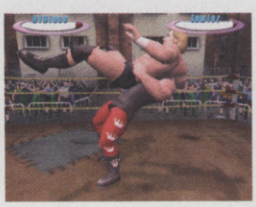


We wouldn't either



Yeah, very impressive. Bet he can't play chess, though

Ahh, true love



Surely this kind of thing is illegal is the US?

Okay, so it's not as high-profile as SmackDown!, but it does have some neat ideas. If you dig wrestling and don't mind getting into the ring with a load of old wrinklies, check this grappler out.

CVG RECKONS

With top crumbly fighters and smart looks, LOW is almost old gold. **Joff**

7

If you like this try these...
WWF SmackDown! 2 (PSone)

Tracking enemy fighters isn't always easy

The detail on both aircraft and ground objects is impressive

Destroy strategic targets like bridges

Two missiles is enough to down a plane

COST: **£39.99**
OUT: **FEBRUARY 1**
PLAYERS: **1-2**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO**
PUBLISHER: **SONY**

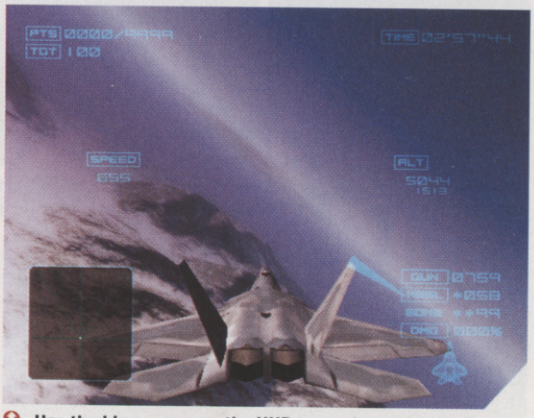
Ace Combat Distant Thunder

Flight sims leave Geek Street for Dude Avenue

It's a little known fact that flight sims were invented to keep all the world's geeks off the streets while doubling up as an anaesthetic in case of wartime shortages of knock-out gas. Indeed, most gamers reckon adjusting flaps and raising undercarriage is less fun than crawling on your belly over razorblades. The fighting's rarely any more interesting, with targeting computers automatically locking onto planes too far away to see. Snore.

Ace Combat: Distant Thunder is different. It's probably the best jet combat game in the history of man. It looks amazing, with yawning canyons and skyscraper-filled cities drawn to within spitting distance of photorealism. The planes look fantastic, and are shown off brilliantly in Gran Turismo 3-style replays. The handling feels amazing too.

A perfect balance has been struck between making the flying feel real, and yet letting you grasp how to do it straight away. You won't fly into mountains every two minutes, but you'll have a thrilling challenge tracking enemy fighters in your sights for long enough for your missiles to lock on. Backing up the linear mission structure is the story of a young boy, whose family was killed by the game's elite Yellow Squadron. It's told in static pictures and voice-overs, and manages to be affecting rather than cheesy.



Use the blue arrow on the HUD to track nearby targets

SHORT BUT SWEET

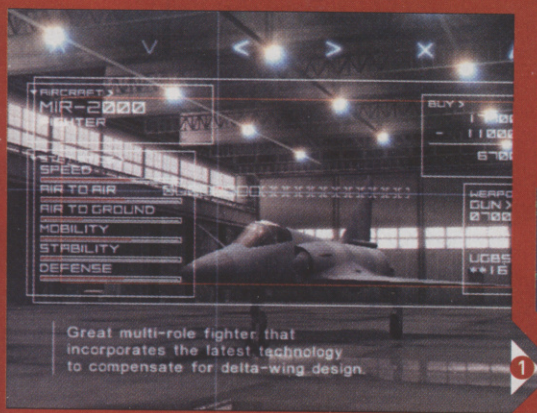
With only 18 missions to play through it's not a massive game, but the variety on offer is genius. One classic has you buzzing an enemy city, taking out banks of solar panels, avoiding anti-aircraft fire and sky-bound fighters. On the way home, you've got to pick your way through a tight canyon to stay below 2000ft, as the enemy breaks out a massive cannon that fries anything in the sky above that altitude. Trust us, as the timer ticks down between each boom your heart will be racing.

The air combat is also class, with lock-on missiles missing if you're not up close when you let them rip. The feeling of being in a warzone is amplified with voices that boom through on your radio, both allied and enemy pilots barking orders to each other.

The versus modes rock too, with target shooting competitions complementing mad dogfighting action. What's wrong with it? You can do the single player game in a weekend, and, as brilliant as this is, the words 'flight sim' will deter many.

BUY BEFORE YOU FLY

Complete your mission objectives, and you get handed a wad of cash to spend. The more brilliant you were in the sky, the fatter the reward. You use this cash to equip your fighter with even more lethal weapons, or buy a whole new plane to fight in. The GT3 of flying games? You bet.



Each time you destroy a new type of plane in combat it gets added to those available in the hangar

Tasty, nimble, quick and has a big payload. The Jordan of the air?

CVG RECKONS

Ace combat – well the name pretty much says it all. **Dean**

8

If you like this try this...
Sky Odyssey (PS2)

COST: **£39.99**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1**
DEVELOPER: **SONY STUDIO CAMDEN**
PUBLISHER: **SONY**

You are the elite pilot of a Dropship, a futuristic aircraft that's part Harrier jump-jet and part armoured personnel carrier. It can hover. It can fly at supersonic speeds. It can carry things. It can fire cannons and missiles. But making it do any of the above is a task that will make you feel weak with frustration.

Terrorists are the scourge of our world, whether now or at some point in the near future, which is when Dropship is set. From the deserts of Libya to the Jungles of Colombia and the steppes of Kazakhstan, there can be only one answer to the problem – bomb them back to the Stone Age. Will do. Over and out.

Dogfighting is tricky at high speeds. The Arctic panoramas look cooler than a polar bear's todger

Dropship

Damn, this is hard! If you're like us you'll just wanna jump ship

Your first task is to learn the controls and pass the training missions, which is easier said than done. Your dropship has two modes: Hover and Flight. In Hover mode your craft behaves like a helicopter, in Flight it flies like a plane.

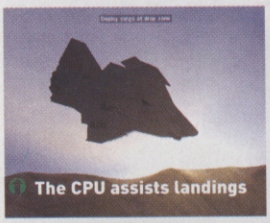
CONTROL FREAK-OUT

Each mode has a different control method and there are so many buttons to learn that in the middle of a high-tension dogfight you'll feel like you've got more things to think about than a depressed philosopher. Take it from us, Dropship is about as easy to pick up and play as a Game Boy precision-welded to an anvil.

Get into the campaign missions and there is some satisfaction to be had. You have to drop off troops, pick them back up again, blow up enemy vehicles and destroy ground installations, as well as dealing with air-to-air threats.

Friendly troops and fellow dropships go about their business and lend you a hand, and in some missions you even get to give orders to other units.

But these levels are hard. We mean 'go bright red and scream at the TV' hard. When you've just completed what you thought was your final objective on your twentieth attempt, only to be given another insanely difficult task, you can't help but feel it's all a sick practical joke. It's at that point you wish whoever designed the game was there with you so you could shove the disc up their bung-hole – while it's still inside the PS2.



The CPU assists landings

Looks sweet, don't it? But believe us, these missions are so hard you'll be weeping blood

Keep low to avoid radar detection. Watch for trees

Keeping track of all that on-screen info ain't easy

FORGET FLYING – LET'S DRIVE!

Occasionally you get put behind the wheel of a ground vehicle. Your ship has experienced engine failure and you've had to emergency land in enemy territory. Now the only way home is in the APC stowed in the cargo bay. Unlike flying, driving is easy, if a little basic. Even more fun is controlling the gun turret on the back of an armoured car while someone else drives.

Dish out the pain from the gun turret of a ground vehicle. It's simple – just point and fire. Lots of fun

If you're the driver, then you can get the computer to man the guns for you

CVG RECKONS

So hard you'd swear that someone's playing a joke on you. For all its good points, this will give you fear of flying. **Steve O**

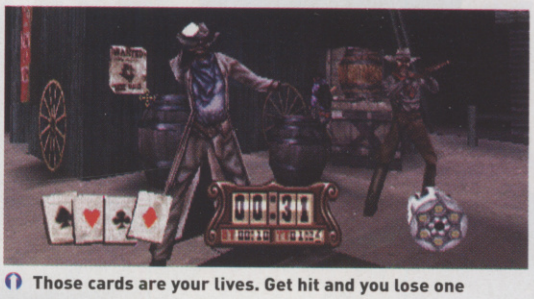
5

If you like this try this...
Ace Combat: Distant Thunder (PS2)

Gunfighter:

The Legend Of Jesse James

Bandits, breasts and bullets. Yes!



Those cards are your lives. Get hit and you lose one

COST: **£19.99**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1**
DEVELOPER: **REBELLION**
PUBLISHER: **UBI SOFT**

Mexican bandits have made off with your busty missus. But you're Jesse James, one of the meanest gunslingers ever, so you whip out your six-shooter and set off on a Wild West adventure, unleashing hot lead fury on every darn-tootin' villain who crosses your path. Yeehaa! Problem is, like most gun games, there aren't enough levels and the gameplay becomes repetitive once you've blasted through it a few times.

Similar to the Time Crisis games, Gunfighter is a pop-up-and-shoot affair that sees you wasting bad guys from behind the cover of barrels and boulders. The action is packed with Western movie cliches – one of your buddies is sat on a horse, with a noose around his neck, the other end tied to a tree. You've got to shoot the rope first time or the horse will bolt, leaving your mate a little breathless.

Other scenarios include a creaky saloon bar, an old mine, a speeding train and a dusty town. But though the Wild West theme is cool and works well, this is definitely a game of style over content. With only five short levels plus a few meagre sub-games, and no multiplayer whatsoever, you'll soon tire of pumping slugs into poncho-wearing moustachioed bandidos.

Pepper some goons with this big old Gatling gun

Better aim straight or it's curtains for your buddy

Shoot pop-up targets in one of the sub-games

CVG RECKONS

Gunfighter looks the business and has a great cowboy feel, but the show is over far too soon. Mike

6

If you like this try this...
Time Crisis (PS2)

Monsters Inc.

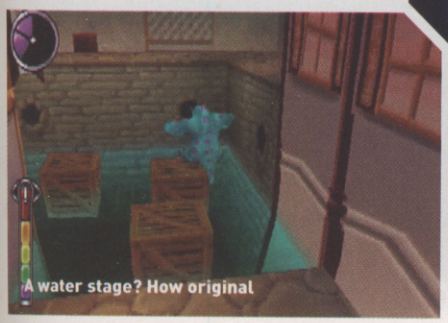
Toy Story it ain't

COST: **£39.99**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1**
DEVELOPER: **A2M**
PUBLISHER: **SONY**

Scaring the crap out of small children is usually something you do if you have a taste for prison food, but if you're a monster it's fine. So much so you are not only encouraged to do it, you're actually trained in the art.

But the only really monstrous thing about this game is that it's a flat, lifeless, cliched beast, totally unlike the vibrant rollercoaster of a game we should expect from a Pixar movie licence. Especially a decent one like Monsters Inc.

Just one of the allegedly humourous ways you can scare practice robots into running off. Mummy, make it all go away



A water stage? How original

Decisions, decisions. Do you play as the big ball of fluff or the little snot-nosed goblin? Tough one

Ah, the old double jump trick, eh? Never saw that one coming. No really

The tightly laid-out levels are so uninspired and sparsely populated with toys and objectives it's almost like being on rails. You spend most of your time trudging around looking for Ooze Pots until your scare meter is full. You then find a practice robot and hammer buttons on your pad to put the fear up it. Woo-hoo!

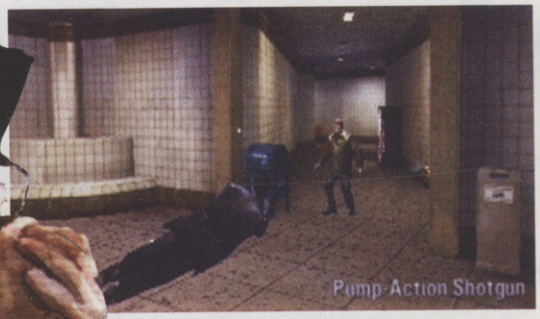
And because the whole game is set in a training environment, you never actually get to scare any children in the real world. "Where's the fun in that?", you may ask. "Exactly," we'd reply from our cell.

CVG RECKONS

Looks outdated, and plays like it's even older. Smells like the bad ol' days of movie licenced games. Les

2

If you like this try these...
Jak And Daxter (PS2)



A slo-mo leap usually does the job

Go on the rampage in Ragnarok night club

CVG FACT

Max has already appeared on PC, and will be on Xbox in March. Word is a movie's planned too.

COST: **£44.99**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1**
DEVELOPER: **REMEDY**
PUBLISHER: **TAKE 2**

There's carnage on the deserted, snow-lashed streets of New York and one man is the cause. Undercover cop Max Payne has been pushed over the edge, his spirit broken. Crazed drug addicts murdered his wife and child. Now, framed for the murder of his police partner and exposed as a member of the NYPD by the mafia goons he's been befriending, Max is totally alone and on the rampage.

Every wise guy and mafioso mofo needs wasting, and every mob boss needs capping in Max's single-minded quest to wipe New York clean and ultimately avenge his family's death. It's bleak and bloody, but also slick and stylish, and you get to tag along for one hell of a ride.

FIRST PERSONS FIRST

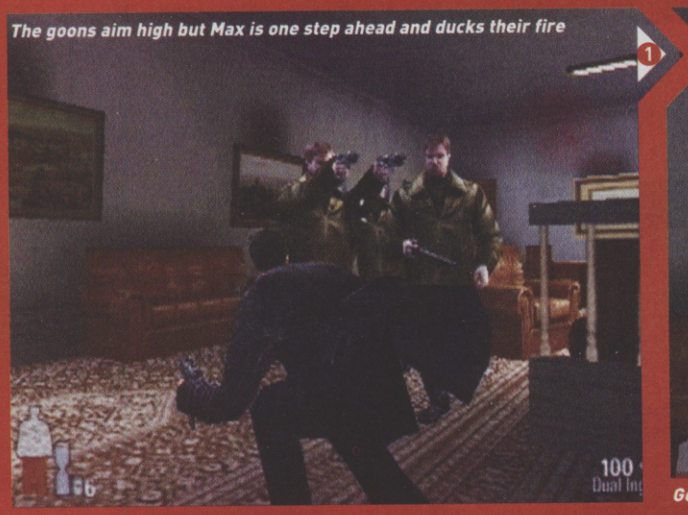
Max Payne exploded onto PC a couple of months back in a hail of automatic Ingram

Max Payne

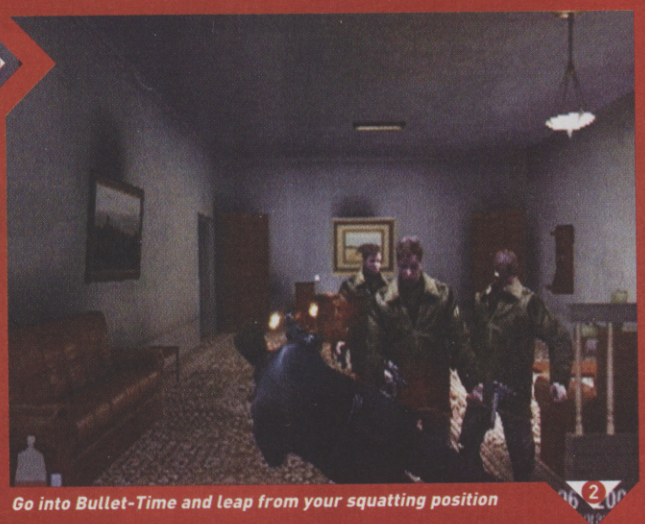
'Max' fun or a 'Payne' in the ass? Ha ha... Ah

SLOW MO A-GO-GO

Remember how blown away you were by those slow-motion camera spinny bits in The Matrix? That's just what Bullet-Time feels like. Slam the R3 or L1 buttons to enter Bullet-Time and the game slows right down, letting Max see and then dodge incoming bullets. It's a cinematic treat and makes precision aiming a whole lot easier too. You're gonna love it...



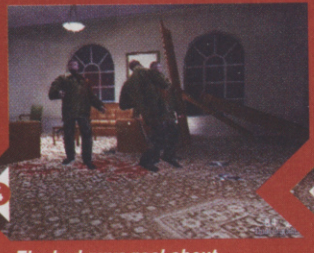
The goons aim high but Max is one step ahead and ducks their fire



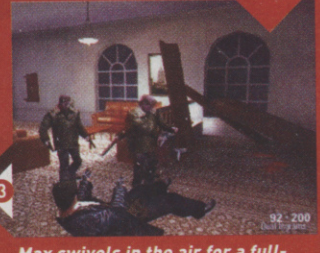
Go into Bullet-Time and leap from your squatting position

Max attacks relentlessly until they've all been 'retired'

Sayonara! The middle guy's had it and his buddies look on in horror



The bad guys reel about, confused and vulnerable

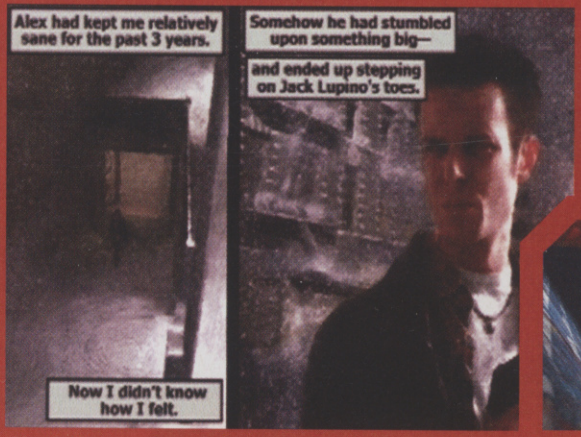


Max swivels in the air for a full-frontal attack

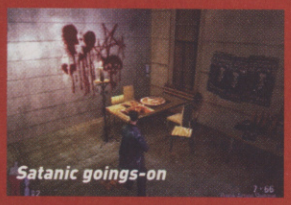
NO PUNCHES PULLED

Say what you like about PC gamers, but at least the lucky devils always get adult-oriented games. And none of the sometimes shocking content has been cut from the PC version in the port to PS2.

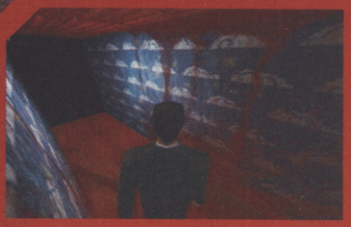
Max Payne isn't gratuitously violent in the same limb-ripping way as, say, Soldier Of Fortune, but there are some grizzly deaths and lots of blood, not to mention the odd baby lying murdered in its crib. It's nothing you wouldn't see in a 15-rated movie or in a graphic novel, but some of the darker moments are guaranteed to upset your granny. Bless 'er.



Max P ditches cutscenes in favour of stylised comic strips



Satanic goings-on



Play Max's recurring nightmare

Check Max out. With his dodgy leather jacket, new-age medallion and grimace, he is truly the king of uncool

Get behind the drum kit and make like some drunken skin whacker

Max leaps into the waste-paper basket

fire and computer nuts fell on their knees to the unabashedly console-oriented gameplay. Now Max is on PS2 and is far more at home with a joypad and TV screen than a mouse and monitor, even if there are a few hiccups in the conversion.

Although played from a third-person angle that gives a nice view of Max's short back and sides, the game feels more like a first-person shooter to play. The left stick moves Max, you look around with the right stick and the shoulder buttons are for weapons and jumping. Actions like opening doors and pulling switches are carried out with the X button.

The levels are pretty linear and, like an FPS, you have to weave and strafe your way through buildings and outdoor arenas, taking out the bad guys while avoiding fire yourself. Nothing extraordinary so far then. But Max Payne has got an ace up its sleeve: Bullet-Time.

Painkillers heal you

The low leap is sure to surprise wise guys

Miss this leap onto the moving train you'll splat yourself on the floor

BULLETS WHIZZING PAST

A one-man war is hard to wage when the odds are as stacked against you as they are in Max Payne. To even the score the developer has devised one of the coolest game features we've seen in years.

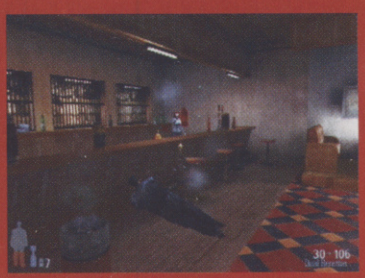
Pressing R3 will activate Bullet-Time, slowing the action right down. Now you can see the hail of bullets heading for your ass and have a better chance of avoiding them with a well-timed roll or leap, all while furiously blasting away.

Better yet, whack the L1 button while moving and you execute a stylish Bullet-Time slow motion leap into the air, giving you the chance to surprise your enemies and take them out before you even hit the floor. A gauge next to your health meter

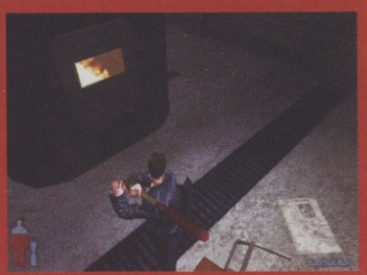
MAX THE DESTROYER

Destruction is the name of the game in Max Payne and everything looks better with a bullet-hole in it. Max can blast boxes to find extra items, fry bad guys with Molotov cocktails and even pepper the asses of the fairer sex in seedy hotel bars.

Grenades will always upset mafia types



Find cover before the broad blasts you



When firepower fails, try your trusty bat

Check out the stylish set-pieces such as Max leaping from flame-filled rooms

Max's nightmare continues with a grizzly vision of infanticide

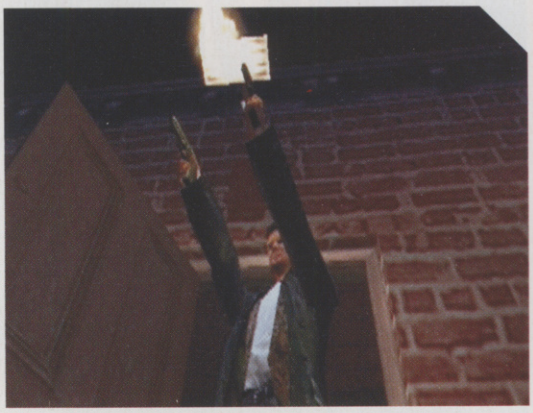
shows how much B-Time you have left, and it runs down pretty quickly. But you can always top it up by blasting more bad guys to the ground in a spray of claret.

While Bullet-Time works best when you enter a room full of goons, riddling them with bullets before they even get a chance to draw their guns, you won't be able to resist the temptation to use it as much as you can. You'll find yourself wasting your precious slo-mo gliding through empty corridors. Or maybe that's just us...

ALMOST PERFECT

Max Payne is as stylish a game you could ever play and the noir atmosphere really adds to the experience. It has a few flaws though, not least to do with the conversion to PS2. PC Payne required a meaty graphics card-enhanced machine to run smoothly and it's sad to see that sometimes the PS2 simply can't cope.

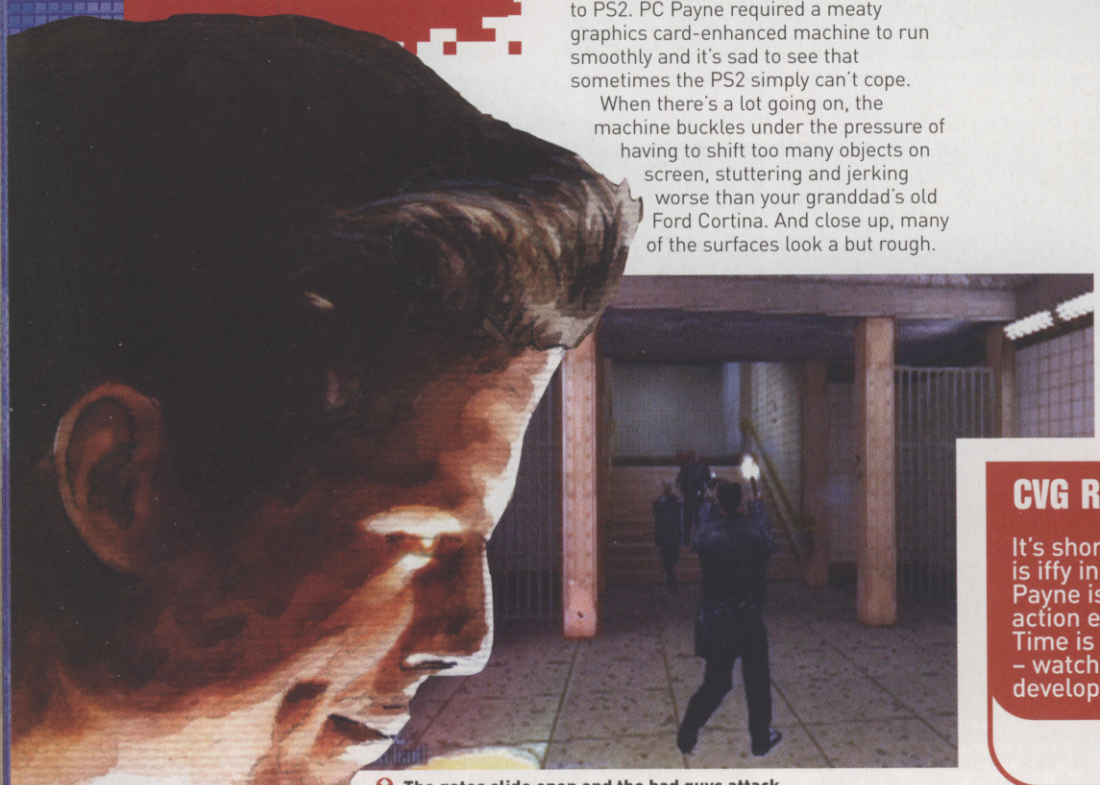
When there's a lot going on, the machine buckles under the pressure of having to shift too many objects on screen, stuttering and jerking worse than your granddad's old Ford Cortina. And close up, many of the surfaces look a but rough.



Pause the game and the camera spins around Max

Also, it's one of PS2's shortest games, which is saying something. But there is replay value, in the unlockable Time Trial modes and increased difficulty settings.

It's also so atmospheric, stylish and satisfying to play that you'll want to complete it at least twice anyway. Max Payne doesn't just feature Bullet-Time, it *is* Bullet-Time, and without this sublime gameplay master-stroke, the fact is the shallow shoot 'em up action would get repetitive. Luckily this gameplay gimmick never gets boring and the game is an unrelenting action experience that's impossible not to have fun with.



The gates slide open and the bad guys attack

CVG RECKONS

It's short and the conversion is iffy in places, but Max Payne is still an intense action experience. Bullet-Time is a genuine innovation – watch other games developers rip it off. **Lee**

8

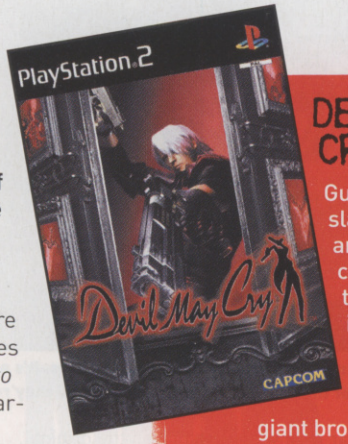
If you like this try this...
Grand Theft Auto III (PS2)

WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON

WHETHER YOU'VE just got a PlayStation 2 for Christmas and need to start your games collection, or have had a PS2 for a while and are in desperate need of a new challenge, Virgin Megastore has the right games for you.

Pro Evolution Soccer is a must for every goal-hungry football fan, *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3* and *SSX Tricky* are perfect for those who like their games more extreme, while *Grand Theft Auto III*'s gritty mix of law-breaking and car-stealing is ideal for action-hungry gamers.

What's more, you can find each of these red-hot games plus loads more at your local Megastore. So whatever turns you on, you'll find it at Virgin Megastore.

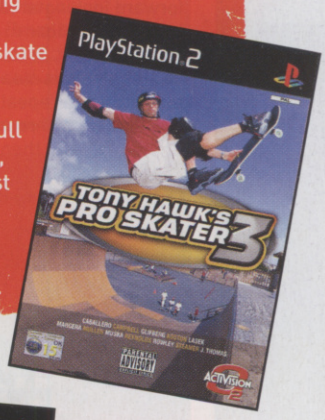


DEVIL MAY CRY

Guide demon slayer Dante around haunted castles and through ghost-infested catacombs, bagging bad guys with a giant broadsword and a sawn-off shotgun. This horror epic is action all the way and is every arcade fan's dream. Or should that be nightmare?

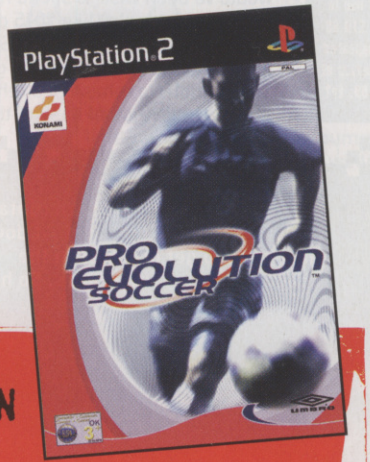
TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

Even if you can't tell an ollie from a kickflip, *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3* is guaranteed to get your pulse racing. Boasting razor-sharp graphics and skate parks that are bursting with obstacles to pull cool stunts off, this is the most fun you can have on four wheels and a plank of wood.



SSX TRICKY

For sheer speed out on the snowy slopes, *SSX Tricky* can't be beat. Make it from the top of the mountain to the bottom in the fastest time, pulling off spectacular stunts and cool tricks on the way. Great fun for both one and two players.



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER

This is the David Beckham of PlayStation 2 football games. *Pro Evolution Soccer* is fast, smooth and easy to get to grips with, but has enough depth to ensure true football fans can play whatever team they want, how they want. So if your dream is for England to win the 2002 World Cup, take *Pro Evolution Soccer* out on to the pitch.

GRAND THEFT AUTO !!!

Steal cars! Gun down the police! Break every law in the book! You're a runner who's making a name for himself by doing jobs for The Mob, taking out rival gangs with car bombs and generally causing chaos in Liberty City. Buy it before it's banned!

Virgin megastores

Serious Sam: The 2nd Encounter

Still serious, still years too late...

The laser cannon... last seen in the original

COST: **£19.99**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1-16**
DEVELOPER: **CROTEAM**
PUBLISHER: **TAKE 2**

Not again. It's like getting a CD as a present from your Mum only to find it's a band that were hot years ago.

The first Serious Sam was just mindless blasting, which, perhaps due to a shortage of other shooters at the time, was mistaken by some for quality 'fun'. We reckoned it was a shooter for people who didn't play a lot of shooters, and whose expectations hadn't moved on since Doom. The original's strong points have been improved on, but they still aren't strong enough to overcome the basic flaws, even at this low price.

SERIOUSLY SLACK

Quick description of any level: 1) Run forward looking at (admittedly) gorgeous locations. 2) Hear masses of creatures coming at you. 3) Run backwards firing until the area is clear. 4) Run forward to new area and repeat until you're bored stiff. Not a lot of room for subtle tactics or stealth here, then – should sound familiar to anyone who played the original.

The only breaks are locations with 'puzzles', ranging from a series of jumps to walking through a room avoiding being blown onto spikes by a mysterious breeze. How original.

Despite the initial impression of a fast action-packed first-person shooter, one short session shows the developer would've been wise to spend more time polishing gameplay like 2015 did with Medal Of Honor. The original Serious Sam was a rehash of five-year-old game ideas. The sequel is a rehash of a rehash, and they've made a bit of hash of that as well.

When there are plenty of creatures on screen like this, it's a good time to roll a Serious Bomb into the middle of them, the screen whites out and they're all toast

That'll be one of those traps. Jump it

If he's so hot, why isn't the snow melting?

CVG FACT

The first instalment was Croteam's debut title. It was due to cost £19.99 but appeared on shelves at £29.99. Er?

CVG RECKONS

A very average shooter. The fact it's out about half a year after the original is a bit of a clue. Les

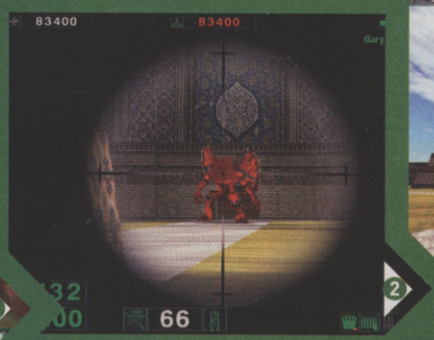
5

If you like this try these...
Medal Of Honor (PC), Half-Life (PS2)

THE GOOD BITS

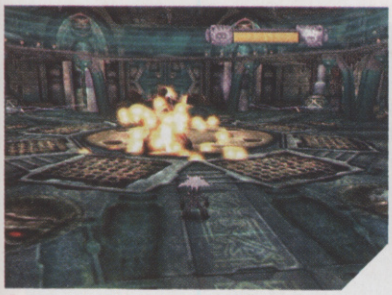
Unfortunately, Serious Sam contains so few 'good bits' that those it does have tend to get drowned in the choppy sea of average-ness. So hey, here they are in their own presentation gift box, just in case you were wondering what they were...

Each level has a scene where loads of creatures attack you

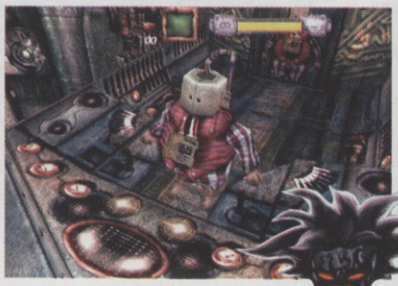


Yeah, it's been done a million times before but the sniper rifle is good fun

What other game lets you blast an elephant's arse with a shotgun? We could be struggling for good bits now...



Super-Cyp has power but he's still pants



A resemblance to Razorbeard?

Still images look pretty but when the game moves it's jerk city

Evil Twin

Separated at birth. From fun

Use your puny catapult to take out all the bad guys, Zelda-style

COST: **£39.99**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1**
DEVELOPER: **IN UTERO**
PUBLISHER: **UBI SOFT**

Evil Twin wants to be a sophisticated platform game for adults. The mood is dark, characters are supposedly edgy and the story elaborate. In reality the game is a charmless sub-Rayman skankathon that's almost patronising in its efforts to appear 'grown-up'.

Cyprien's a surly ginger boy with 'attitude', who turns into a super-hero alter-ego called Super-Cyp. Oh pur-lease.

STUPID NAME, DULL GAME

You've seen everything Evil Twin has to offer already, and you've seen it done far better. Visuals are muddy and jerky, characters are laughable and the level design uninspired.

Transforming into the more powerful Super-Cyp livens things up a little but taken as a whole, Evil Twin is dire. What's most depressing is that the team working on the game has clearly laboured over it too, so there's masses of detail and huge levels to explore – it's just that you won't want to. There's little to recommend about Evil Twin. Even 3D platform freaks will struggle to force themselves to enjoy it.

CVG RECKONS

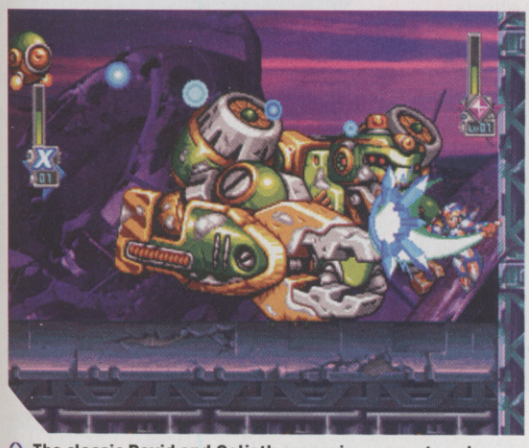
Unimaginative, cheesy and boring to play – not at all what you want from a PS2 platform game. **Lee**

4

If you like this try these...
Soul Reaver 2 (PS2), Rayman Revolution (PS2)

Mega Man X6

Six: how old you need to be to enjoy this



The classic David and Goliath scenario... except you've got a laser sword and you can shoot bullets at the giant

Put one foot out of line and you're totally screwed

Fill this bad guy with your bullets of justice

COST: **£19.99**
OUT: **FEBRUARY 1**
PLAYERS: **1**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**

Before the creation of specular lighting, motion-capture, bump mapping, and Gouraud shading, we lived our lives in 2D parallax-scrolling sprite-filled heaven with the likes of Super Mario World and Mickey Mouse: Castle Of Illusion.

In Mega Man X6 we're transported back to this retro world of flat platform gaming, but sadly the action is too easy and there aren't nearly enough levels for it to compete with the epic classics from that bygone golden age.

HAVE WE PLAYED THIS BEFORE?

Blending the standard platform ingredients of precision jumping, cutesy visuals, and Godzilla-proportioned end-of-level bosses with some very basic shoot-'em-up action, Mega Man X6 is strikingly similar to the previous game in the series, both in its layout and gameplay.

Capcom hasn't made any real improvements, failing to expand the levels or crank up the intensity of the action. However, Mega Man X6 is clearly aimed at videogame novices and a younger audience, so unless you fall into that category or are a serious retro-head, this dumbed-down platformer isn't likely to provide that much of a challenge.

A praying mantis-like machine attacks you

Za-zap! You pull off a special attack to sap the enemy's health

CVG RECKONS

Platform action for young kids and newcomers to the newfangled world of videogames. **Mike**

5

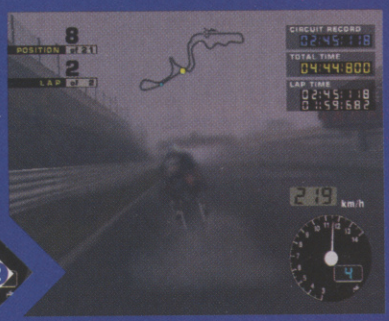
If you like this try this...
Warioland 4 (GBA)

SOME LIKE IT WET

Admit it, readers, you get a particularly good kick out of watching Grand Prix when it rains because you can see the racers flying off all over the place. Well now you can see exactly what they go through, thanks to the all-new weather effects Namco has kindly included in the first-person mode. Take a look at these screenshots to see how it changes your race completely.

Damn, visor a bit smeary but think I can just about handle it

Woah, didn't see that corner coming. Never mind, I made it...



Arggggggggghhhhhhhh, who's the git who nicked the track? They'll pay later

COST: **£39.99**
OUT: **FEBRUARY**
PLAYERS: **1-2**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO**
PUBLISHER: **SONY**

Moto GP 2

Knee to the floor racing, two-wheel style

There are two species of motorbike racing fan. First there is the hardcore type who can tell you every spec of every bike and who will rush out to buy this, regardless of what we say.

He'll run every Grand Prix at full length and after endless practice sessions on each circuit he'll be able to take every bend at the perfect speed and leave the other racers trailing in his wake. He'll be almost unbeatable in the two-player mode, but – and it's a big but – he'll have no friends to play against. And then there's the rest of us.

REVVER IN LEATHER

We'll watch the races on TV if we know there are going to be some meaty crashes. We'll rent this game or play a mate's copy, using the other riders as our brakes. We'll find a course we know pretty well and thrash our mates at it, and after a few goes at the Season mode we'll spend all our time completing the Challenge mode. We'll also be the ones who feel that the new Moto GP doesn't offer a whole lot more than the last one.

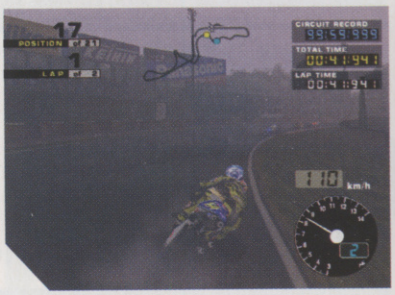
Five new tracks (which makes us think they scrimped a bit on the last game) is certainly a welcome improvement, adding to the longevity for our hardcore (former) friend. The rest of us will amuse ourselves with the new weather effects. Switch to first-person in the rain and watch as your visor gets smeared. Funny until you realise you can't see a thing and that opening between two riders you thought you saw was in fact a brick wall. Ouch.

Moto GP2 is an improvement over the first game, but to our minds it doesn't warrant shelling out another £40 for what is essentially little more than an upgrade. Even with those rain effects.

CVG FACT

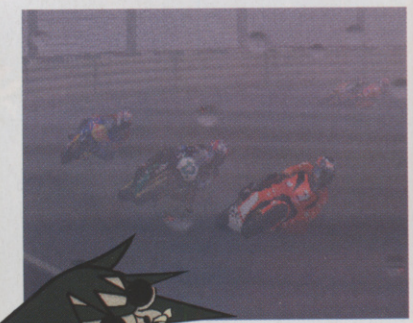
In Japan, Namco has released a controller designed especially for this game. Check out an importer until they bring it over here.

Blind as a bat and coming up to a tight bend. Just as well you're only doing 110 then



Don't fall off during the one-armed salute...

Replays show off your racing style



Strange how the ride is smooth when the wheels look rough

Challenges include a 20 second time trial

CVG RECKONS

Lacks the thrills to attract the casual racer, but if you wear a leather jacket with a team's colours then you've found your ideal game. Les

6

If you like this try these...
GT3: A-Spec (PS2), F1 2002 (PSone)

COST: **£TBC**
OUT: **FEB**
PLAYERS: **1**
DEVELOPER: **KONAMI**
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**

Police 24/7

Act like an arse, motion-sensor style

Konami brings out the first motion-sensor gameplay on PS2, enabling you to shoot criminals with a lightgun and physically dodge bullets by sticking a web cam on your telly.

But there's a hitch. At the time of going to press, Konami informed us that the only gun to work with this arcade conversion is the old Hyper Master gun for PSone, and only a handful of web cams are compatible with the game. Add to this the fact that they're still going through an approval process with Sony in order to release the game with a web cam included, and you'll understand that playing this game as it is intended to be played may become something of a hassle unless you've got all the necessary gadgets.

Hardware complications aside, what about the game itself? The concept is great, but in reality the action in 24/7 isn't fluid or exciting enough to balance out the fact that you look and feel like a complete prat when you're playing it.

DUCK, YOU WEENER!

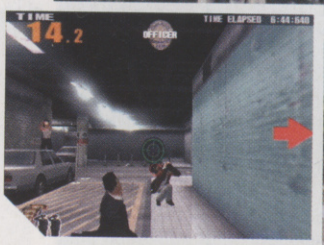
You're sat in the passenger seat of a speeding police car, frequently ducking down behind the dashboard for cover and to reload, during a full-scale shoot-out scenario reminiscent of the cool boat chase sequence in Time Crisis 2.

But unlike TC2, the gun fighting action here feels less intense and slower. As you duck and sidestep in front of your TV like a prancing nob-head, the movements of your character feel very sluggish, no matter how much tweaking you do to the sensitivity of the web cam in the options screen. This lack of responsiveness, coupled with the fact that the on-rails action in most of the levels is very repetitive, leaves you feeling quite disappointed.

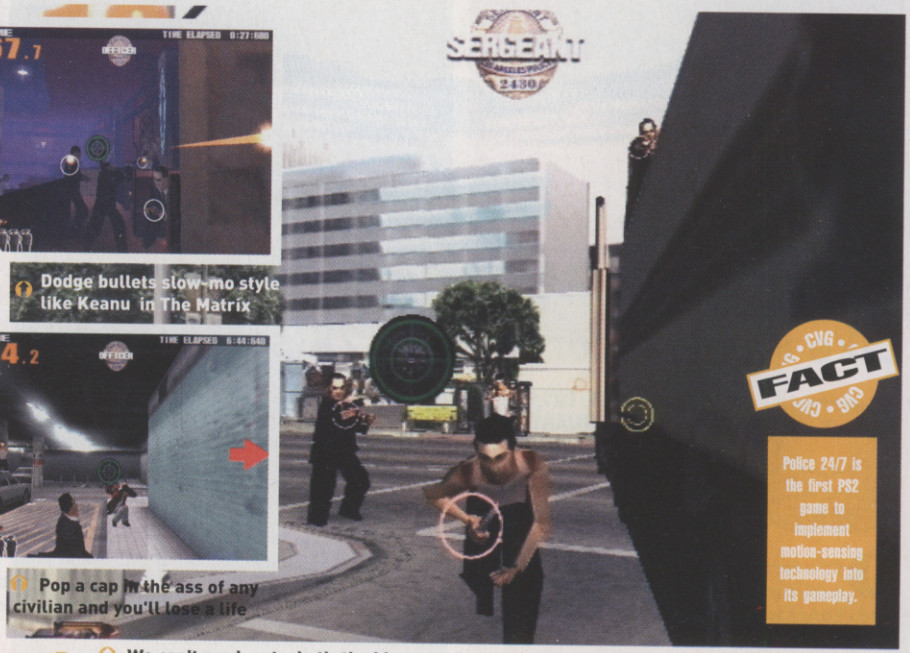
To increase the lifespan there's a Challenge Mode and a few extra mini-games chucked in, like Kamikaze Rushed, which sees you simply dodging an army of oncoming sword-wielding bad guys. Wow. But the mini-games are so dull that after one visit it's doubtful you'll go back for more.

Sadly this is a feeling that's carried over into the main game, because although the visuals in 24/7 are by no means bad, the awkward gameplay, humiliating physical interaction and complicated peripherals set-up is enough to deter most people from even bothering with it.

Dodge bullets slow-mo style like Keanu in The Matrix



Pop a cap in the ass of any civilian and you'll lose a life



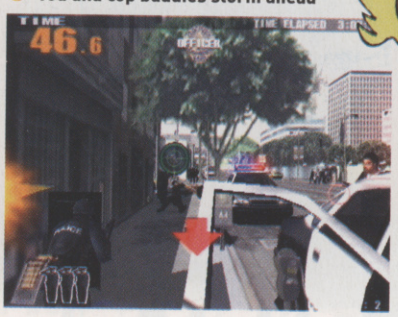
Police 24/7 is the first PS2 game to implement motion-sensing technology into its gameplay.

We can't work out what's the biggest crime: attacking an officer or wearing that string vest

The trippy dance floor makes aiming tricky

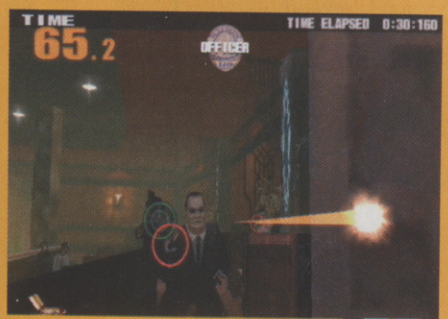
Duck, reload, then shoot like mad

You and cop buddies storm ahead



BOB AND WEAVE

Like the majority of gun games, the action in 24/7 has you moving through levels on rails. But instead of simply being armed with a duck/reload button, like TC2, you have much more movement, enabling you to duck as well as to dodge left and right. Problem is, the movements you make in real life aren't translated well in the movements of your character, leaving you with the feeling that you're not in complete control.



Step left and return the enemy's fire

Bullets sail past – unload a few slugs and duck

CVG RECKONS

It takes some serious effort to set it all up, and for your trouble you'll be made to look like a tit. **Mike**

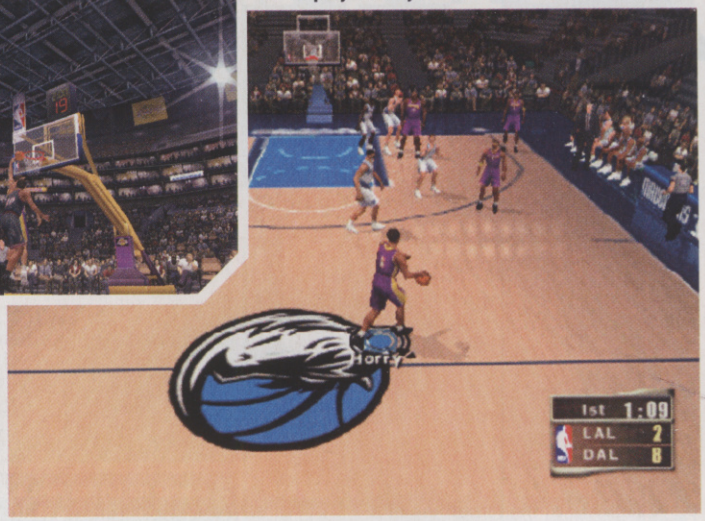
4

If you like this try this...
Time Crisis 2 (PS2)

The free-throw shots are quite tricky to master

Slam that puppy home for two points

AI players on your team will wave for the ball



NBA 2K2

Like Michael Jordan, the 2K series just keeps on flying

COST: **£29.99**
OUT: **FEBRUARY 8**
PLAYERS: **1-4**
DEVELOPER: **VISUAL CONCEPTS**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**

It's a fact of gaming life that some publishers shamelessly rEvAmp and rEpAckage the same lucrative sports game franchises year after year, in order to EArn a few more bucks. Not mentioning any names of course.

Admittedly, Sega isn't a major culprit, but the NBA 2K series has gone under the developer's knife a couple of times now. This latest version has mainly stayed faithful to the winning formula of 2K1, but incorporates subtle changes which both improve the overall b-ball experience and highlight NBA 2K2 as one of the best basketball games available.

OFFENSIVE ONSLAUGHT

2K2 boasts smoother animation than before and, with a faster turn-around time between each point scored, matches feel faster and the action more relentless.

As well as cranking up the pace, AI has been improved, meaning that computer players are more openly aggressive, both when defending and storming towards the hoop, adding intensity to games. A cool new 'drop step' move enables you to wrong-foot defenders and make a dash for the hoop, which in turn adds excitement and flexibility when you're on the offensive and looking to create a shooting chance.

Further significant additions include more street courts, updated signature moves, team strips and player line-ups. And you can implement more strategy with a new option that lets you choose to play man or zone defence, news that should please tactical geeks.

The end result is a great piece of handiwork. The gameplay is fast-paced and fluid, the multiplayer action is brilliantly balanced, and there's lots of life to be found in the numerous game modes on offer.

If you're vertically challenged, playing 2K2 may make you feel insecure

CVG FACT

The development team behind 2K2 were also responsible for the much-anticipated but disappointing Floigan Bros. Let's hope they stick to making sports games from now on.

"Give me that ball you freaky beanpole!" Stealing possession is essential for winning

CVG RECKONS

No staggering or very innovative advances for the b-ball genre, but ranks as one of the best in its league. Mike

8

If you like this try these...
NBA Street (PS2), NBA Live 2002 (PS2)

TAKIN' IT TO THE HOLE

The pace in 2K2 is pretty tough and breaking through the opposition's strong AI defence is tricky. But armed with the all-new 'drop step' move, you'll find that the action around the hoop is far more explosive and looks a great deal more dramatic than before. What's more, this level of non-stop intensity is consistent throughout the whole game.

The opposing team floods back in a defensive cluster, so you move into a prime position for attack...

You wait for the right moment, but watch the shot clock or you'll run out of time

An opening appears, so you pull off the 'drop step' move and leg it for the hole

Scrabble

COST: **£19.99**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1-4**
DEVELOPER: **RUNECRAFT**
PUBLISHER: **UBI SOFT**

The built-in dictionary won't let you use rude words – how f*ing s**t is that?**

The fun never stops in the gaming world. Actually, it will if you let this into your life. Let's face it, if you wanted to play Scrabble with your mates you'd buy the boardgame and play it for real. At least then you wouldn't have to rely on them looking away from the screen whenever one of you is taking your turn.

Scrabble has never exactly played a large role in our lives. In fact, it's because of tedious boardgames like this that we all got into videogames in the first place. If you are desperate to learn new words by playing this on your own, go and buy a dictionary – it's a shedload more interesting.

2

COST: **£39.99**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1-4**
DEVELOPER: **SILICON DREAMS**
PUBLISHER: **TAKE 2**

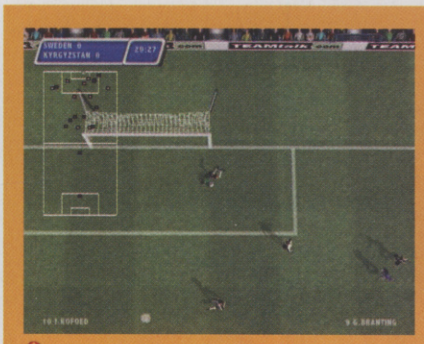
UEFA 2001/02

Imagine the games design meeting where UEFA developer Silicon Dreams looks at all the footie game reviews saying none of them are as good as Pro Evolution Soccer. Then imagine deciding whether to make yet another footie game. If you were a betting man, you wouldn't waste money on this being more than a three-legged donkey...

And you'd be right. With AI that leaves you gasping at the stupidity of the other players, and gameplay that's clunky and lacks the fluidity of PES, UEFA is more Sunday League kickabout than proper Champions League.

4

Look at them all, wondering how they can get a transfer to Pro Evolution Soccer



He shoots, he scor... no wait, it bounces off the posts, which fall down and kill the goalie

Kick Off 2002

COST: **£19.99**
OUT: **FEBRUARY**
PLAYERS: **1-4**
DEVELOPER: **ANCO**
PUBLISHER: **ACCLAIM**

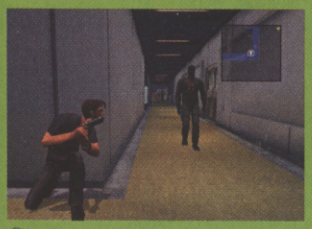
Even Dr Who would struggle to travel this far back in time. Kick Off was a big hitter circa 1989, but so were boyband Bros, and look what happened to them. This updated version keeps the old top-down view with tiny players and laughable animation. Come to think of it, the pitches and stadia look toss too.

The controls take a lot of getting used to as the ball doesn't stick to your feet like most games, so dribbling and shooting is really tricky for a while. Retro gaming may turn on some people, but compare this to the Premier League footie games of today and you see why some things are best left dead and buried.

3

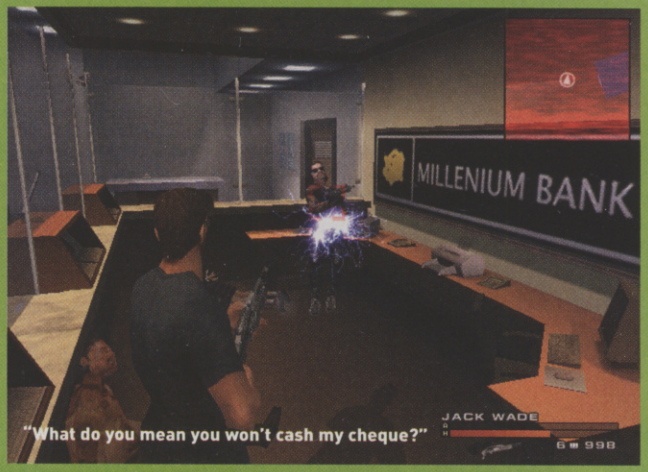
Headhunter

MGS2 has some competition. Oooh, scared



Does this view look familiar?

No helmet? Should be ashamed



"What do you mean you won't cash my cheque?"

COST: **£39.99**
OUT: **NOW**
PLAYERS: **1**
DEVELOPER: **SEGA**
PUBLISHER: **SONY**

Poor old Sega. Driven out of the hardware business by Sony, now its next big hope for glory, Headhunter, gets released just a few weeks before the mighty Metal Gear 2 on its home turf, PS2.

What this slack imitation of MGS suffers from is being a bit on the linear side – there's no real chance to explore. There are problems with the targeting system as well, which just haven't been fixed since they were exposed in the DC game. The environments are great to look at but it still no stunner. In fact, it's almost a pity this will get completely lost in the clamour to snap up every copy of MGS2 from the shelves. Why? Because it's good, but not good enough when pitted against stiffer competition than the DC version faced.

It's a good game in its own right, but is sure to be left in the shade by the mighty MGS2

7

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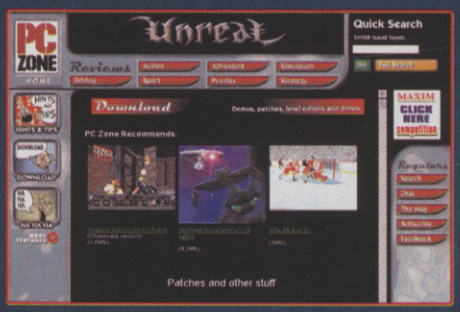

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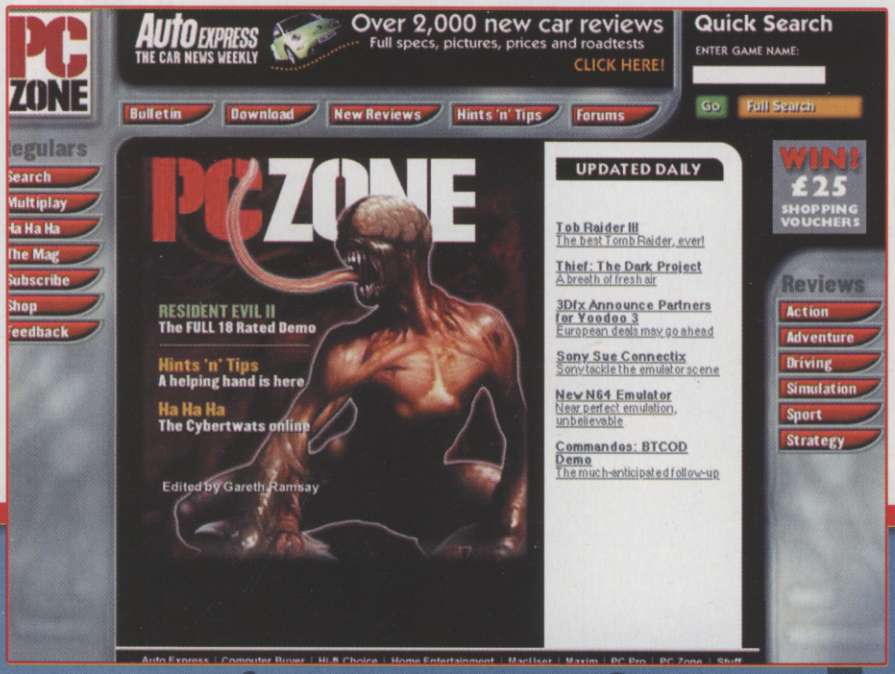

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Next Month In computer and video GAMES

MGS2 - THE VERDICT

Only a lamer would review this without finishing it several times first. Which is why we waited 'til now

FEEL THE FORCE

CVG locks lightsabers with Star Wars Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast

FREE GIFT!

Exclusive Tekken 4 mini punch bags with next issue! Are we Tekken the mickey? No! Every reader gets one of Namco's inflatable legends!

BOOOOM!!!!

Xplosive! Xbox! Xclusive!

Be a winner with another CVG mega compo

In The Buff!

CVG goes under the covers with Xbox's stake 'em up to get the low-down on this heart-stabbing fighter

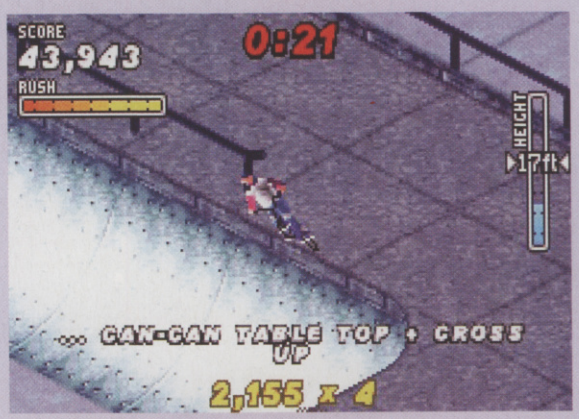
CVG Issue 244. On sale Thursday 14 February

DAVE MIRRA FREESTYLE BMX 2

COST: **£34.99**
PLAYERS: **1-2**
OUT: **NOW**
DEVELOPER: **FULL FAT**
PUBLISHER: **ACCLAIM**

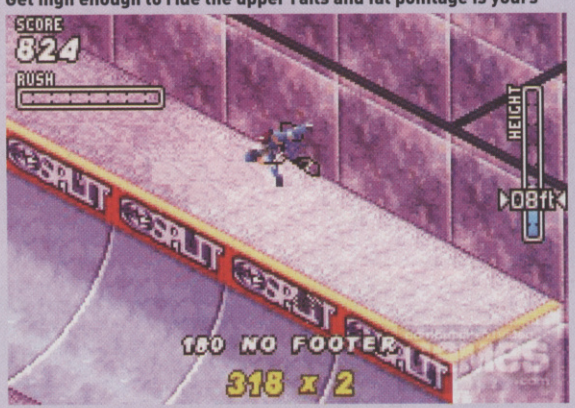
The world of sick tricks and heavy grinds is something most of us can only ever enjoy in videogames rather than in real life. Besides, it's much more satisfying to pull tailwhip-backflips in a game, free from the danger of breaking your face on concrete. That way you can gather lard on a beanbag and still be an extreme sports legend.

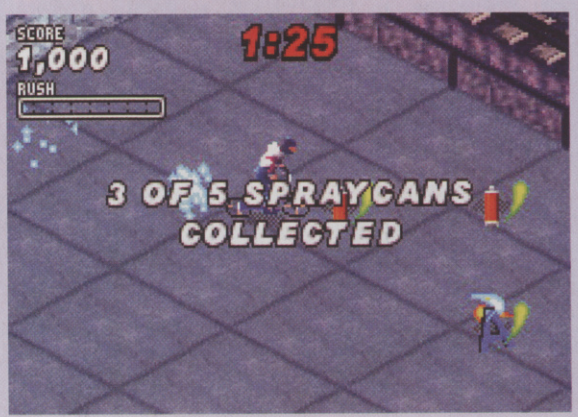
DO A SUPERMAN!
Pump pedal in a fine selection of BMX arenas as you try to trick your way to bikin' glory. Given that Mirra uses isometric pseudo 3D environments and 'borrows' Tony's controls, comparisons between this and Tony Hawk's 2 are inevitable.



It's BMXing so tricks have got different names from skateboarding

Get high enough to ride the upper rails and fat pointage is yours





The spraycan challenges are simply a matter of 'find and collect'

The height gauge shows how much air you've caught

Stop talking it through – you're about to land on your head

Mirra makes the grade though, and brings a few new features to the mix, including some excellent two-player link-up games.

Each stage offers about a dozen individual challenges, including scoring the highest points possible for trick combos. Controls are fluid and, while not quite as fast as you might like, it's certainly not sluggish. The graphics go the extra mile too.

In short, this is much better than Mat Hoffman's GBA effort and second only to Tony Hawk's as GBA's top extreme sports title.

8

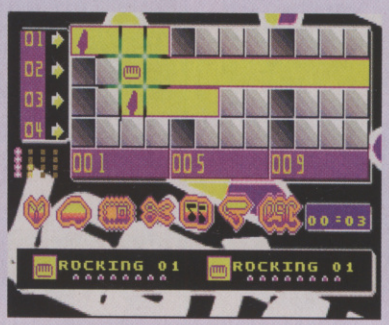
LDS

UR HANDS BUSY

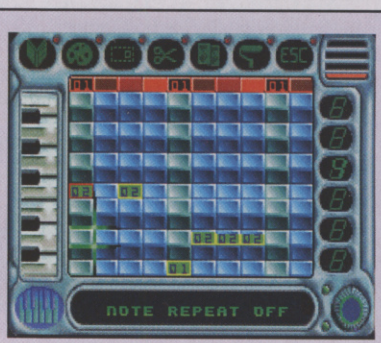
What could well be the best Mario game of all time blasts onto GBA as Mario Advance 2

Mike Tyson Boxing: a brutal but beautiful boxing experience on GBA, courtesy of the ex-con himself

Choose from hundreds of phat samples to create a tune that will change the world



Liven up the interface with a selection of different skins. We didn't choose very well



Create riffs, then sequence them here. Not as difficult as it may seem

POCKET MUSIC

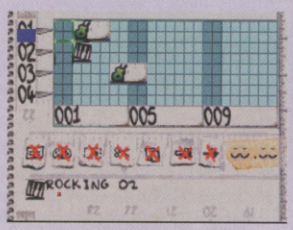
COST: **£34.99**
PLAYERS: **1**
OUT: **NOW**
DEVELOPER: **JESTER**
PUBLISHER: **RAGE**

Music makes the people come together, apparently. So prepare to come in knee-trembling unison with GBA owners everywhere as the first handheld music generating program bursts onto the system in a fanfare of electronic beeps and Eminem samples. Believe!

As well as a version of Slim Shady's My Name Is to play about with, there are literally hundreds of different samples to sequence and edit. Pocket Music isn't a game, but it's far more entertaining than many GBA titles we've seen.

I AM THE MUSIC MAN

The interface may be confusing and a bit unwieldy at first but, with practice, making music becomes a fluid and satisfying experience. The number of samples and the limitless way you can create and sequence your own riffs means that if you're at all musically minded, there's almost no end to the joy.



Assign icons to different riffs

7

AN AMERICAN TAIL: FIEVEL'S GOLD RUSH

It's a walking can of baked beans! Send it back to hell

Eat hat-cloth, you foul crocodile of doom!

COST: **£29.99**
PLAYERS: **1**
OUT: **NOW**
DEVELOPER: **HOKUS-POKUS**
PUBLISHER: **SWING!**

Based on the sickly-sweet animated movie of the same name, this platform adventure game is sure to keep your kid sister happy. You might even enjoy it too – when nobody's looking, of course.

It's fairly standard 2D scrolling action as Fievel the cowboy mouse jumps obstacles and knocks down enemies Oddjob-style with his Stetson hat or by jumping on their heads. The pretty graphics and relaxed pace make it perfect for younger players, but while the game is enjoyable in its simplicity, it's unlikely to impress platform game veterans.

6

Lady Penelope shoots robot dogs in the face! Get down, you bitch!

Graphics are simple but it's the action that counts

THUNDERBIRDS INTERNATIONAL RESCUE

COST: **£29.99**
PLAYERS: **1**
OUT: **NOW**
DEVELOPER: **PUKKA GAMES**
PUBLISHER: **SCI**

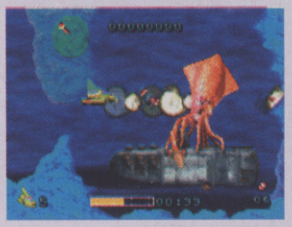
It's got the opening countdown, the pounding theme tune and more cheesy puppets than a Punch and Judy show in a brie factory. Thunderbirds on GBA is a fun adventure that perfectly captures the feel of the old TV show. Control seven different vehicles as well as adventuring on-foot across 30 levels, saving the world from The Hood's reign of terror.

The on-foot sections are the weakest but even these are occasionally fun

F.A.B.

The level challenges are simple, but each vehicle brings with it a new style of play, such as zooming into the screen avoiding asteroids and other space debris in Thunderbird 3, or digting in the dirt in The Mole. Objectives are set at the start of each section and it's up to you to use each vehicle's unique skills to save the day.

This variety in the gameplay is what makes Thunderbirds such a laugh, and while it looks a bit like an old Amiga game, playing is always great fun. It's packed with authentic Thunderbirds touches too, and we especially liked the faithful rendition of Parker's posh 'haccent' in the text cutscenes, M'lady.



The submarine levels are cool

The Mole seeks out hidden items

Scout new locations in Thunderbird 1

FOOT AND MOUTH

Playing about with the various Thunderbirds craft is magic but the game is let down by some iffy side-scrolling on-foot platforming and exploration sections. The jerky movement on these levels certainly recreates the puppet feel of the show, but also makes them a dog to play.

Otherwise, Thunderbirds is a good adventure with simple and enjoyable gameplay. Just as importantly, it stays true to the spirit of the show. One to buy the old man if the thought of having Lady Penelope in the palm of his hands makes him shiver.

7

Seeing the creatures learn is rewarding but a bit long-winded

CREATURES

COST: **£29.99**
PLAYERS: **1**
OUT: **NOW**
DEVELOPER: **ELO**
PUBLISHER: **SWING!**

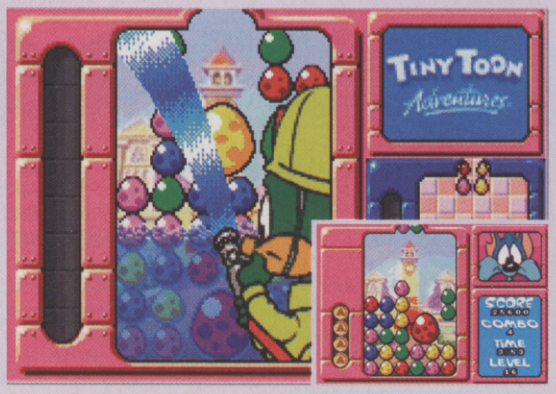
If you're in need of some nurturing action in the absence of any new Pokemon games, Creatures might just give you the fix you need. Guide and goad a bunch of charmless critters called Norns. Your actions dictate how they grow and you can be as virtuous or as vicious as you like. Just be prepared for the consequences.

Artificial life sims don't appeal to all, and as advanced as the AI is, many will get bored before seeing even half the game world. The longevity may be potentially limitless, but only sim-lovers will want to bother.

6

WACKY STACKERS

COST: **£29.99**
PLAYERS: **1-4**
OUT: **NOW**
DEVELOPER: **WARTHOG**
PUBLISHER: **SWING!**



Plucky Duck gets his hose out

Big eggs mean big... points

Different coloured eggs fall from the ceiling and you have to flip and rotate them to match the colours at the bottom of the well. Matched eggs disappear and the more eggs you get rid of, the higher your score.

Multiple play modes add lifespan and there are some cool character attacks such as when Plucky Duck douses the screen with his hose, or when Dizzy spins into the screen and blasts eggs away. Multiplayer games are a riot too. Not original, but great fun.

7

GAME BOYS GET THE GIRLS PART ONE

Valentine's day is coming and being single is an embarrassment that sucks like a starving piglet on Mummy Pig's teats. Luckily, we've found some cunning ways of using your handheld skills to make you irresistible to women everywhere. Here's the first in a series of invaluable* guides to wowing the honeyz.

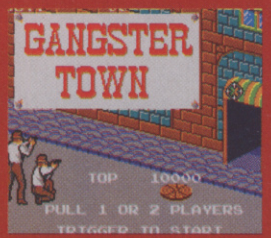
**Only applies to utter geeks*

OPTION ONE: POKE HER, MON

The girls will beg for your number in real life too, oh yes

Girls want commitment. They like to think that once you've had your wicked way with them, you'll still be around to go shopping together afterwards. Ask any female what they want from a man and after "big wallet" and "willingness to be under the thumb", you'll find they want men who are in it for the long haul. Our advice? Carry around a Game Boy Color and your copy of Pokemon Crystal with all 251 Pokemon caught and 138 hours of gameplay time racked up. It's proof that you're the most committed man on earth. Though girls prone to scaring easily may run for the hills, screaming.

OPTION TWO: THE JOLLY ROGER



Turn your neighbourhood into this by being a pirate king

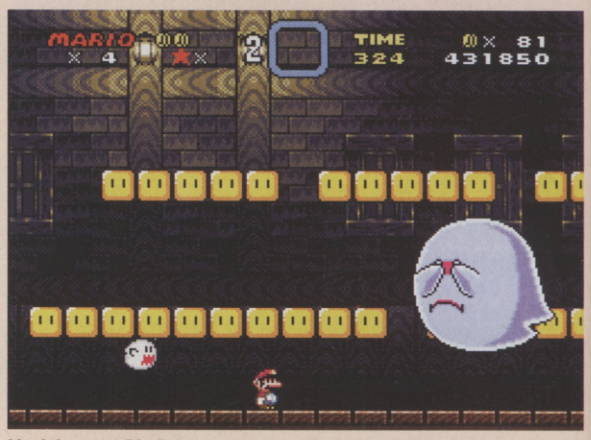
Girls like danger. Why else would all the EastEnders pretty girls (and Sharon) flock around Phil 'pink-cheeks' Mitchell? There are illegal GBA emulators doing the rounds on the Internet and you might be tempted to build up an illegal but sizeable back catalogue of GBA ROMs. Hell, you might even find the technology to burn them onto Flash cartridges and flog 'em to mates to play on their handhelds. The peroxide gangster's moll you'll attract will be all smiles and booty as your illegal pirating empire spreads across the globe, making you bigger than Sony. Though when the cops bang you up she'll seek comfort in the arms of your 'rough diamond' brother. Hussy.

MARIO ADVANCE 2

PLAYERS: **1-4**
OUT: **SPRING**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**

Why is it that a GBA conversion of an ancient SNES game is going to be one of *the* gaming events of 2002? It could be that we've all been blinded by nostalgia for a time before we were spoiled by 3D. Or perhaps platform games have progressed so little that the granddaddy of them all can still wow the crowds.

Or, and we reckon this is closest to the truth, maybe the original SNES Super Mario World is the closest thing to videogame perfection ever created. It's loaded with genius little touches, bursting with character, can be played by anyone with fingers and thumbs and, most importantly of all, has that elusive X-factor that so many games are so badly lacking. Make a space in your life for Mario Advance 2, the slightly reworked re-release of one of the world's favourite videogames of all time. Yes!



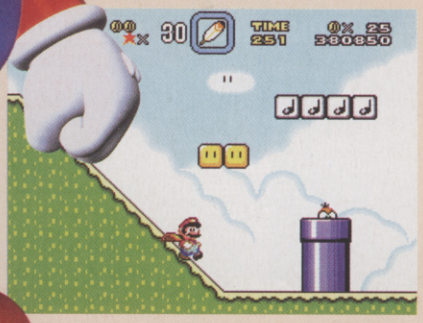
Mario's upset Big Boo – maybe he called him a tub 'o' lard

Power pads like these change blocks from see-thru to solid

Ride a raft of skulls across a river of lava. Cheerful stuff

BIG ITALIAN MOUSTACHE

Part of Mario Advance 2's wonder lies in its sheer size. There are 96 levels spread over eight different lands and the ever-expanding world map is sure to be home to some of the most cherished gameplay moments you'll ever have. Where else can you be chased by giant bullets half the size of the screen, or go swimming with friendly dolphins and ride on the back of sticky-tongued lizards – and love every second of it?

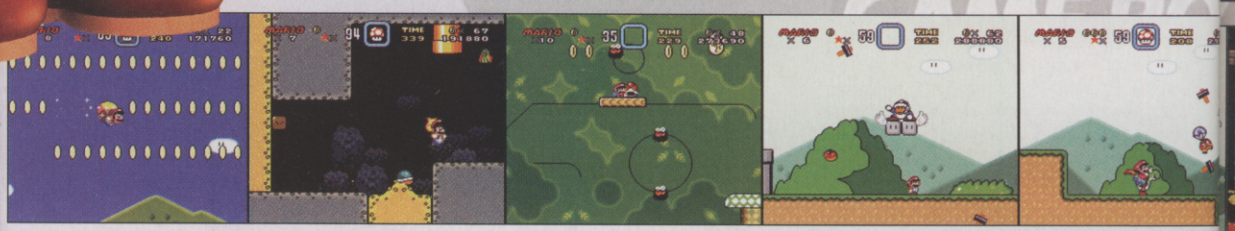


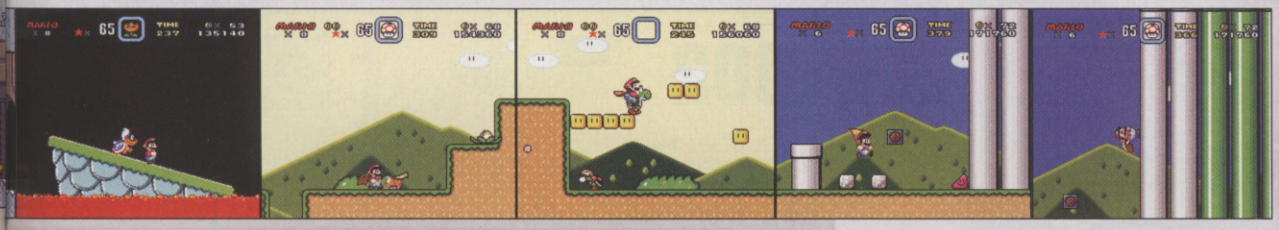
You can fly using the cape to reach secrets

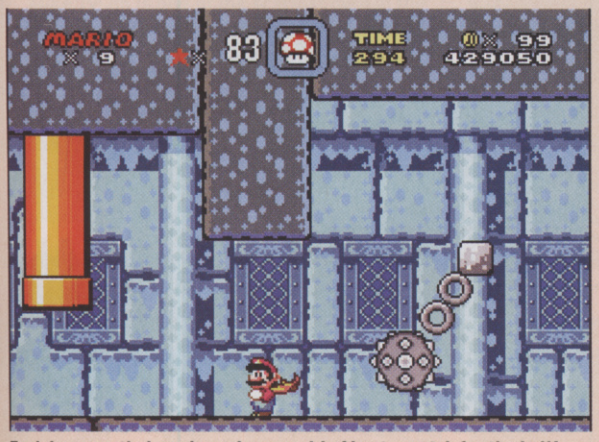
Each of the game's eight main sections is packed with smaller action stages. There are levels that scroll side to side, and up and down, as well as stages that see you swimming with the fishies and working out puzzles in haunted mansions. Mario Advance 2 is about seeking out all of the game's hidden exits, finding as many secrets and collecting as many coins as possible along the way. At the end of each main area you get to have an incredible boss ruck with one of Bowzer's minions. Once they've been busted, it's on to the next area for more surprises and more magic.

MARIO, BOO AND LUIGI TOO

Super Mario World is such a classic that loads of players will remember the joy it brought them all those years ago. While the



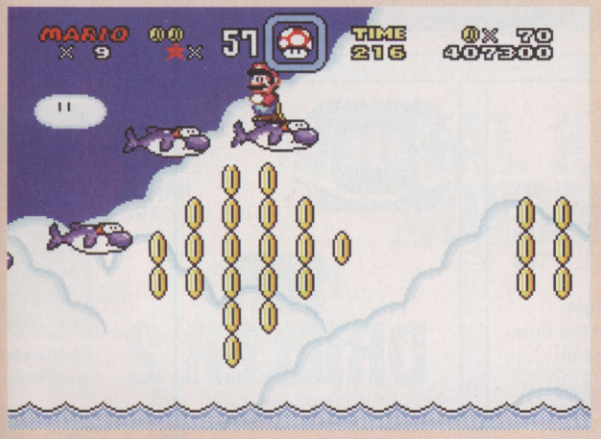




Each boss castle is an ingenious world of hurt – watch for the ball!

GBA version is pretty much identical in every way, there are some new additions and fresh challenges. You can now select Luigi as a playable character from the world map screen. Luigi can jump much higher than Mario and this can really help when you're trying to bag all the hidden coins dotted about for major points and extra lives. The downside is that he's not much cop for precision jumping sections.

Like the GBA remake of Super Mario Bros 2, the dungaree-clad boys now tickle your eardrums with funky speech samples, while the original SNES tunes have been faithfully recreated and sound just as fine as ever. And Super Mario Bros Classic mode is a nice wee multiplayer game letting up to four compete for high scores over a series of fiendish little levels. Conclusion? Wow!!



Check out Mario riding with the dolphins! This game is soooo cool!

LOOK WHAT'S NEW!

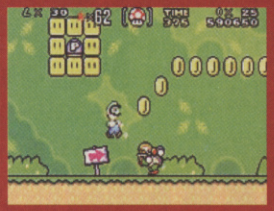
We all want a bona fide, brand-new GBA Mario game, but what better way to keep fans happy until it arrives than by remaking the old classics? We reckon that Super Mario World is the best of all the 2D Mario games and one of the finest platform games ever made. The conversion to GBA is absolutely blinding and there are even some new features to make the game worth buying, even if you know every pixel of the SNES version inside out.

This poster comes in the box

The multiplayer game is sweet

The map doubles as a bestiary

Play as Luigi in the main game



CVG RECKONS

Like Madonna, here's steadfast proof that old things can still be very sexy. Our Japanese version hasn't been out of our Game Boy Advance since we got it. Amazing.

SALT LAKE 2002

PLAYERS: **1-4**
OUT: **SPRING 2002**
DEVELOPER: **DC STUDIOS**
PUBLISHER: **UBI SOFT**

Hurling yourself off an icy ramp into the freezing winter sky with a cold, harsh wind whipping at your perishables is pretty stupid. Even the thrill of representing your country in the Salt Lake 2002 Olympic Winter Games couldn't make up for the threat of frost-bitten chuddies. Solution? Try the officially licensed Salt Lake 2002 videogame on GBA instead.

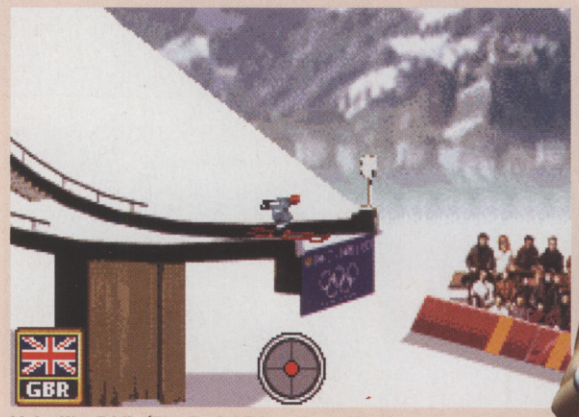
Bobsleighs in non-3D! Shudder...

Snowboard your way to glory?

Which is more wooden – that tree or the inanimate spectators?

Slalom should be better than this

Curling: you even use the brooms



Make like Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards and land on your arse

PROBABLY PANTS

Our preview version was early so we're not going to write this off just yet, but alarm bells are clanging in the distance. There are just six events to choose from, three of which are downhill skiing events that play pretty much the same. The bobsleigh looks like the pseudo-3D bonus round from Mega Drive Sonic 2 but plays worse, and the curling event is crushingly dull. Of course it could all be fixed for the game's release.

CVG RECKONS

Currently it's nowhere near scoring a Gold medal, but there's still hope. At least, that's what Eddie 'The Eagle' would say.

TEKKEN

PLAYERS: **1-2**
OUT: **TBC**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO**
PUBLISHER: **TBC**

More details are emerging about GBA's most eagerly-awaited fight experience. Though still to receive an official UK release date at the time of going to press, insiders have mentioned February as a likelihood.

Expect nine playable characters, swirly 3D arenas with detailed 2D fighters laid over the top and some cool-looking camera zooms. Not sure how hard it'll be to see the fighters on the GBA's tiny screen though.

Paul takes flame fury on the chin

No combo carnage, no Tekken

PLAYERS: **1-2**
OUT: **JAN/FEB**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO**
PUBLISHER: **TBC**

MR DRILLER 2

There's barely any text in Mr Driller 2 and nothing that could excuse making us wait nearly nine months for a UK release.

But Namco's outstanding GBA drill-fest is coming soon, probably in the same deal that'll see Tekken released. Drill the coloured blocks to clear each stage and strategise to save air. With a new two-player challenge, this should prove an essential puzzler.

It's simple bu so sw want to marr your

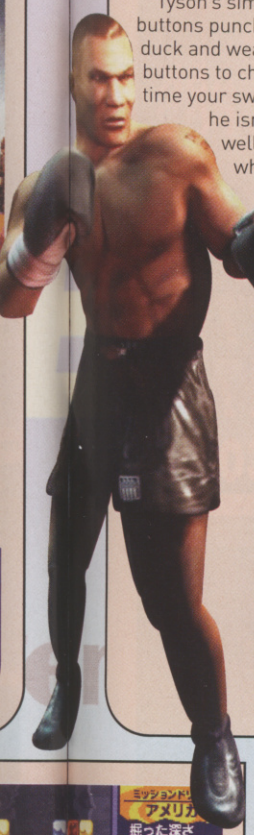
The screen n swirls with special blocks

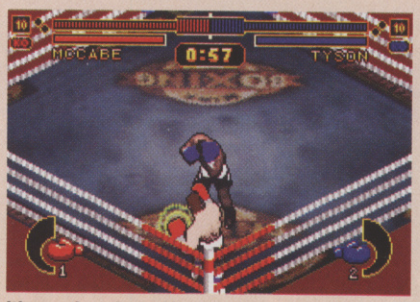
PLAYERS: **1-2**
OUT: **MARCH**
DEVELOPER: **VIRTUCRAFT**
PUBLISHER: **UBI SOFT**

MIKE TYSON BOXING

Mike Tyson is one of the scariest men in the world and if his game was rubbish we'd be too afraid of him paying us a 'special visit' to say so. Luckily, it's actually shaping up nicely. Phew, we can rest easy, ears intact.

Tyson's simplicity is its bonus: the action buttons punch and the shoulder buttons duck and weave. Press and hold the action buttons to charge up a stronger attack and time your swipes to smack your rival when he isn't blocking. The controls work well and there's a full career mode where you set training regimes and organise bouts.





It's arcade-oriented but you still get lots of gauges

Best get away from the ropes

The 3D ring rotates silky smooth. Very tasty

How many lives does this cat have?

CVG RECKONS

Mike Tyson Boxing is shaping into a promising fighter that should have the right balance of simulation and arcade action.

so sweet you'll your GBA

swirls upside down blocks. Woo-hoo!

MORTAL KOMBAT ADVANCE

PLAYERS: **1-2**
OUT: **FEBRUARY**
DEVELOPER: **VIRTUCRAFT**
PUBLISHER: **MIDWAY**

It's a real Fight Club between Tekken and Mortal Kombat, but this will be the first of the two on the shelves. The classic series has won many fans over the years, especially among the more bloodthirsty gamers.

Mortal Kombat Advance is a reworked version of Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3. It takes the sweet bits of the first three games and rolls them into one gory GBA bloodbath. Sounds like fun to us.

Fatalities, Friendships and Babalities are all in this GBA bone-cruncher

INCOMING

Updates on top GBA games out early 2002

SABRE WULF

The GBA remake of the fondly-remembered Spectrum game is shaping up beautifully. Screens released by Rare reveal incredible colours and giant creatures to fight in this jungly quest. Trust us, Sabre Wulf is gonna be huge.

Will you get to fight a colossal bogey?

DONKEY KONG COCONUT CRACKERS

Big furry coconuts are falling from the sky and it's your task to catch them by sliding the coloured panels and dropping the falling fruits onto the gaps. As with all new puzzle games, we won't understand it until we play it. Expect a UK release in February.

DK gets his own GBA puzzle game

KLONOA: EMPIRE OF DREAMS

Klonoa has always been the choice of the confirmed left-field platform fan. He's a whole lot meaner than Kirby, even madder than Mario and, to many, a great deal more likeable than Rayman. And his GBA adventure should prove itself to be another juicy nugget of golden Japanese madness to add to the collection.

The puffy red ball dudes return! Joy!

Another World

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WAVE RALLY - JAP
MAX PAYNE - USA
MONSTERS INC - USA
STAR WARS RACER 2 - USA
DEUS EX - USA
DOWNFORCE - USA
MOTO GP 2 - USA
AKIRA PSYCHOBALL - USA

GAME BOY ADVANCE

TEKKEN ADVANCE - JAP
KING OF FIGHTERS EX - JAP
GUILTY GEAR X - JAP
GRADIUS GENERATION - JAP
MORTAL KOMBAT - USA
DUKE NUKEM - USA
AERIAL ACES - USA
DARK ARENA - USA

Dreamcast

BOMBERMAN HE HE - JAP
MISSING PARTS - JAP
SAKURA TAISEN ONLINE - JAP
TWO ONE - JAP
PANTHER - USA
STREET FIGHTER II MATCHING HEAD HUNTER - UK

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

PIKMIN - USA
SONIC ADVENTURE 2 BATTLE - JAP
ROGUE LEADER - USA
ANIMAL FOREST + - JAP
SMASH BROS. MELEE - USA
SSX TRICKY - USA
SUPER MONKEY BALL - USA
LUIGI'S MANSION - USA
WAVE RACE - USA
CEL DAMAGE - USA
VIRTUA STRIKER 3 - JAP
HYPER SPORTS 2002 - JAP
ETERNAL DARKNESS - JAP
EXTREME G 3 - USA
SOUL CALIBUR 2 - JAP
UNIVERSAL STUDIOS - USA
CRAZY TAXI - USA
TARZAN UNTAMED - USA
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GAME BOY COLOR

LUFIA THE LEGEND RETURNS - USA
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T-Shirts!!

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4X4 EVOLUTION 2 - USA
PROJECT GOTHAM RACING - USA
ODDWORLD MUNCH'S ODDYSEE - USA
AIRFORCE DELTA STORM - USA
FUZION FRENZY - USA
MAX PAYNE - USA
NFL PRIME TIME 2002 - USA
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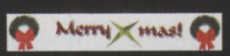

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To get further instructions visit the Keipo website or text the word **'HELP'** to the special 5-digit phone number.

Please ask permission from the person responsible for paying the phone bill before making a call to this service. Calls cost £1.50 per min. Total cost of call £3.00 and maximum length of Service 2 mins. Calls from mobiles may be charged at a higher rate so we recommend you use an ordinary phone. **Customer help line number** 0870 756 8959 For a list of instructions you can write to Synetex PO Box 144 Stockport SK4 3FT

CVG Trailb

Alert! Final Fantasy meltdown! A copy of the movie, a flatscreen L tons of other awesome prizes could be yours. All for the price of a

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CVG's competitions couldn't be easier to enter. Nor could they be rammed any more full with superb prizes. To stand a chance of winning all the goods, answer the questions below and send the form to us. Each correct answer qualifies you for that prize, but get one wrong and you're not eligible to win any of the higher-ranked gear.

FINISH HERE

7th BREATH OF FIRE

COURTESY OF **UBI SOFT**

We all love tales of war, destiny and love, and Breath Of Fire on GBA has got the lot.

Q. Name the blue-haired lead character in Breath Of Fire.

A. Ryu B. Blanka C. Ken D. Dhalsim

6th THE SIMPSONS ROAD RAGE

COURTESY OF **ELECTRONIC ARTS**

Get this right to win the game and a top goody bag.

Q. What is the name of Chief Wiggum's whiney son in The Simpsons cartoon series?

A. Todd B. Ralph C. Bart D. Matt

5th SOUL REAVER 2

COURTESY OF **EIDOS**

Tricky question. Unless you've got CVG Issue 241.

Q. Which bone has Raziel got missing in his body?

A. Collarbone B. Shinbone C. Lovebone D. Jawbone

4th JAK AND DAXTER

COURTESY OF **SONY**

Your best buddy has been transformed into a weird comedy ferret. Say no more.

Q. You have to do some herding early on in the game. What do you herd?

A. Yakows B. Chachickens C. Slosleep D. Papigs

3rd RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

COURTESY OF **ACTIVISION**

So you like ze fightink und ze shootink, ze killink und ze monsterz? Zen you vill like zis a lot. Ja! Ze fantastische Return To Castle Wolfenstein iz up for grabz.

Q. Which Nazi boss do you pursue to Norway?

A. Funeralegs B. Diseasedear C. Deathshead D. I'll have a large bratwurst please

2nd METAL GEAR SOLID 2

COURTESY OF **KONAMI**

The most hotly anticipated game of all time is finally here and CVG has got five copies to give away.

Q. Most of the action in MGS2 takes place on a decontamination facility called...?

A. Great Whale B. Monster Starfish C. Giant Crab D. Big Shell

FAN

Listen up people! Final Fantasy The Spirits Within, the groundbreaking computer-generated animated movie from Columbia TriStar Home Entertainment, is released for VHS rental and to buy or rent on DVD from 21st January 2002. No only is the film itself a masterpiece of graphic wizardry (check it out on www.finalfantasy-themovie.co.uk), but the DVD features a stunning four hours of all-new stuff.

There are two feature-length documentaries, a grand total of 21 'mini-featurettes', a fully original interactive documentary, 82 minutes of 3D playblast video, story boards and much, much more. And LG's RE-15LA30 FLATRON LCD television represents the cutting edge in advanced design and technology. The flat panel TV delivers stunning pictures from a screen slender enough to hang on the wall. And for real versatility it can be used as a PC monitor. What the hell more could you ask for, dammit?

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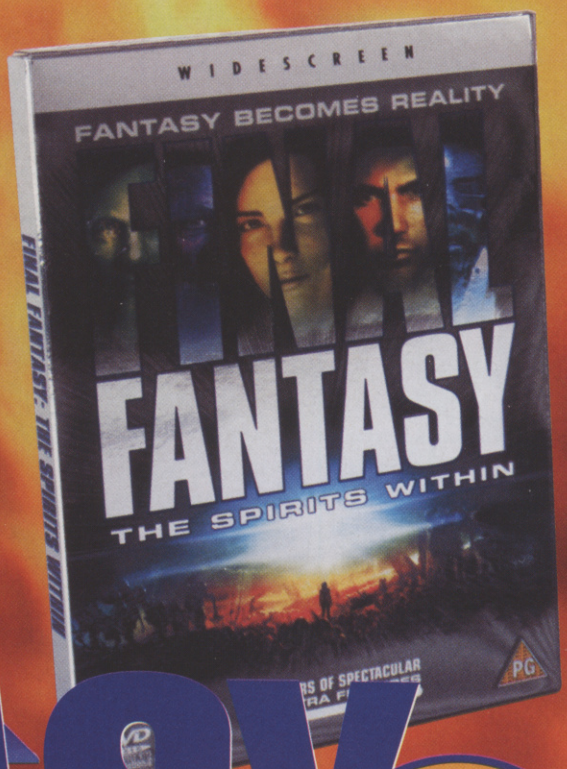

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Q. What planet is the Final Fantasy movie set on?

A. Earth
B. Spira
C. Terra
D. Uranus

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HUNTER'S BACKSIDE!

OUR KID

This month: Our Kid meets Westlife

Developer Top Trumps

THIS MONTH'S DEVELOPER: BRIAN SAWYER OF TRUNCHEON PRODUCTIONS

TOP TRUMP:
"That'd have to be the one I did on my brother's pillow when I was nine and he was six. It was sweet, sweet revenge for ripping the cape off my Luke Skywalker figure." **82**

BOTTOM TRUMP:
"My wife's family came from dinner the other day and I dropped a spoon during the soup. When I bent down to get it, I accidentally let rip, a real humdinger. Her folks were real nice, but I coulda died." **64**

WORST-SMELLING:
"My wife calls my botty burps 'Solid Snakes', because they're silent, but deadly. The worst SBD I ever did was in the elevator at work. One woman actually began crying. Cool, huh." **99**

BEST-SMELLING:
"Are you kidding? I'm a games developer. I live on junk food and baked beans. There's no such thing as a best-smelling fart in my jeans." **23**

CVG's Liam Gets Medical Thumbs-up

"I'm a six-foot, beautiful amazon queen. Marry me!"

Hospital life has been made easier thanks to CVG reader Liam McDonagh-Greaves (see p55).

"We used to have to use stethoscopes and stuff to see if someone was dead," said Dr Jo Smith. "Now, thanks to Liam, we just ask them if they've got loads of great games coming out. If the answer's no, it's off to the morgue with them."

However, the diagnosis has caused problems, with Chris Tarrant being proclaimed dead after hospital staff disagreed with his definition of 'great'.

Meanwhile, doctors also thanked Ultima Online players for pioneering in-game marriages. "The next step is in-game babies. They'll be too busy to have any in real life. Hopefully," said Dr Smith.

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*Actually, four

"Killer" Xbox On The Loose

Police are warning New Yorkers to "stay right indoors, folks" after an Xbox escaped from a city games store. "There are 15 tons of angry Xboxes on the loose," said Lieutenant Chuck 'Trigger' Rogers. "There are no sightings yet, but sooner or later it'll get hungry, and when that baby wants to eat, let me tell you, you don't wanna be around."

Bridges have been closed, although authorities fear the Xbox may use its "frankly awesome" capacity for lifelike water effects to swim the river. Police are also investigating reports of "a huge, square mother" that held up a grocery store, demanding Twinkies and Oreos before making off on a skateboard.

"We're talking about a machine that specializes in first-person shooters," added Lieutenant Rogers. "It feeds on violence and mayhem the way you and I feed on chilli dogs. Damn you, Bill Gates, for ever inventing it." Police are currently working on "a crazy plan that might just work", using a GameCube as bait to lure the Xbox out into the open.

Police calm citizens with a game of Imaginary Twister

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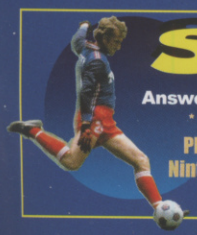

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